

Taliban and kept the country from being a haven for al-Qaida and other terrorists.

Despite the grim current situation in Afghanistan, I am convinced that the seeds of freedom sown by our military men and women will yet bear fruit on Afghan soil.

I and many others warned that a total troop withdrawal in Afghanistan that ignored conditions on the ground was going to be a strategic disaster, and it has been. The United States has historically maintained a limited military presence in foreign countries when it is in our national security interest to do so. And with the presence of just 2,500 to 3,000 troops, we were maintaining stability for a country that was fighting to find its way toward freedom and democracy and simultaneously protecting the interests of our own country.

All of that, of course, is now at an end. President Biden's disastrous decision to completely withdraw U.S. troops on a timeline he announced to our enemies allowed the Taliban to bide their time until our ultimate departure. American citizens are still trapped in Afghanistan, and thousands of Afghans who worked with U.S. troops and U.S. intelligence are in great danger.

And Afghanistan is well on its way to once again becoming a terrorist haven. In fact, the Taliban has already appointed terrorists to top posts in its new government. There is also every reason to fear that government oppression will once again become the norm in Afghanistan, particularly—particularly—for women and girls.

We heard over and over again that President Biden was going to restore America's standing in the world and repair our relationships with our allies, particularly our NATO allies. In fact, he has done the opposite. His Afghanistan disaster is a national embarrassment. He failed our troops; he failed the American people; he failed our allies; and he failed the Afghans who risked their lives with and for us.

The Parliament of a key U.S. ally, the United Kingdom, condemned President Biden in the strongest terms for his dishonorable withdrawal from Afghanistan. The fact that we have left behind thousands of Afghans who worked with our country and whom we promised to protect is unconscionable. It is a stain on our country's record that will not easily be wiped away.

I hope—I really hope—that the President does everything within his power to get Afghans who worked with us and any remaining U.S. citizens out of the country as soon as humanly possible.

In the coming weeks, the relevant committees in the House and Senate need to conduct thorough oversight and investigations to understand why this withdrawal was done in a manner that further empowered and strengthened the Taliban and their al-Qaida allies. We also need to discover why there was no effective plan to get our

citizens and our Afghan allies to safety.

The scenes of chaos at Hamid Karzai Airport should never have happened, and we need to find out why they did. Thirteen brave Americans died protecting our withdrawal: 11 marines, 1 soldier, and 1 sailor. It is hard not to wonder if their deaths could have been avoided had there been a better plan in place for evacuation. The families of these men and women and the American people deserve answers, and the Biden administration must provide it.

The weeks of August 2021 will live in infamy. The President's ill-considered, untimely withdrawal and complete lack of an effective plan to evacuate Americans and our Afghan allies created a humanitarian crisis and the conditions that allowed the Taliban to swiftly take over the country.

The President's actions have helped condemn women and girls and the entire Afghan people to once again live under pre-9/11 oppression, and he has emboldened terrorists and increased the security risk facing our Nation.

It is tragic that all the good we have done in Afghanistan has come to this.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). The Senator from Alabama.

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, sometimes we don't all agree on things here in this Chamber, but I think we can all agree that a quality education has the power to uplift and transform someone's life. It is the key to freedom and the key to opportunity.

I know this because I have seen it firsthand. I have coached and mentored hundreds of student athletes over my 40-year career. I witnessed the difference an education can make in the outcome of someone's life, how it truly creates a pathway to success.

In fact, that is one of the reasons I was inspired to be an advocate for better educational opportunities for all Americans—because investing in our children's education is investing in our country. It is like putting a downpayment on our country's future success by creating opportunity.

I have recruited hundreds and hundreds of students from across our country. I have been in their homes. I have seen how they live, and I have seen how they have grown up. Unfortunately, for many children from difficult backgrounds, a large percent coming from one- or no-parent homes, real opportunities can be hard to come by—very hard.

Regardless of what town that they lived in or what their family was like, I wanted my athletes to know that education can open many, many doors. Most of them understood and appreciated. As I have said many times before, the only thing that this country owes you as a citizen is an opportunity, and I still believe that is true.

There is a lot that goes into making the decision to go to college. Students

often think first about the cost, or they could be the first in their families to attend college. My parents didn't attend college. One worked in manufacturing. The other worked on a line. They were very supportive of my decision, but I still had to figure out a lot on my own, and it is a huge decision.

But there is always the question: Is this the right place for me? Will this school provide me with a path forward for success and a productive future?

Many students across the country have turned to historically Black colleges and universities, better known as HBCUs, to answer these questions because of the pathway HBCUs provide. While they are respected for their strong traditions, HBCUs are the ultimate opportunity creators for students all across this country. Serving nearly 300,000 students annually in 21 States and territories, HBCUs have made tuition costs more affordable, costing 30 percent less, on average, than other higher education institutions. And because of that, 60 percent of the HBCU attendees are low-income, first-generation college students. HBCUs not only knock down barriers, but they build upon the inherent potential of their attendees.

I am proud that the great State of Alabama is home to 13 HBCUs, the most of any State in the Nation. These colleges are major contributors to communities across our State, producing more than 15,000 jobs annually for our local economies. And they also prepare students for the 21st-century job market.

Let me tell you a bit about some of the great things that HBCUs in my State have accomplished. Among their many contributions, Alabama HBCUs have helped to fill the continuing need for more African Americans in STEM—or science, technology, engineering, and math—professions. For companies desperate to recruit top talent for entry-level STEM roles, HBCUs offer thousands of highly qualified candidates.

As part of this effort, Alabama State University offers the Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program. This program focuses on giving undergrad STEM students a chance at hands-on research and professional development opportunities. In fact, Alabama State University just announced a new partnership with Apple where it will become a center for coding and creativity.

In Montgomery, Trenholm State offers free STEM courses for dual enrollment students to allow high school students to get a jump start on their college careers.

But it is also important to recognize that HBCUs support low-income, first-generation college students in meeting and exceeding their postsecondary educational goals.

Alabama A&M University recently announced its new master's apprenticeship program for social work—the first of its kind by any HBCU in the country. This investment in our students

and communities will help to ensure that we will have more social workers to meet the needs of the underserved that are in our population.

Tuskegee University, home of the renowned scientist George Washington Carver and the Tuskegee Airmen, leads the country in African-American aerospace science engineer graduates—leads the country.

Oakwood University in Huntsville is one of the top universities sending minority undergraduate students to medical schools.

And, just this year, the achievements of two Stillman College students and two Talladega College students were recognized by the White House as part of the prestigious HBCU Scholars Program.

Traditional 4-year degrees aren't suited for everyone. I noticed that in my years of coaching. Everybody does not need to go to a 4-year university. And Alabama HBCUs have a strong tradition of empowering students through the vocational and technical programs that they offer.

In as little as 6 months, a student at Lawson State Community College in Birmingham can launch a career—just in 6 months. Their vocational programming provides low-cost and fast-tracked avenues for students to gain subject-matter expertise in industries like HVAC work and building construction.

Meanwhile, Gadsden State Community College is working to make a new Advanced Manufacturing Center part of its future to help prepare students for the roles that the manufacturing industry will be filling in the coming years.

Finally, we have repeatedly seen that when Alabama HBCUs collaborate with local businesses and government agencies, communities thrive, innovation occurs, and progress is made.

Shelton State's Fire College is responsible for training paid and volunteer firefighters and EMTs.

Bishop State Community College just partnered with Alabama Power to offer a 9-week electric line worker training program—only 9 weeks. The graduates of this new program will be the power restoration experts that people rely on in times of need, such as a hurricane, which we have just gone through several in the last few months in the South.

Drake State created a satellite tracking station in partnership with NASA and an amateur radio station that serves as FEMA's relay station during local weather watch activities.

And throughout its history, Miles College has had a strong relationship with the surrounding community, promoting racial equality for African Americans. During the civil rights era, President Lucius Pitts helped to negotiate race relations and supported his students' desires to participate in non-violent protests.

Overcoming decades of adversity and opposition, HBCUs continue to be com-

petitive educational institutions with programs for students who want higher education, career-tech training, or to position themselves for better employment opportunities. We need to honor accomplishments by the HBCUs and celebrate their significant contributions to our society.

Over the last decade, my colleague Senator TIM SCOTT from South Carolina has been focused on doing just that. I am thankful to have joined him the last month to introduce a resolution to formally designate the week of September 6 as National HBCU Week. Because of their work and the work of their leaders, these institutions are deserving of national recognition.

Last week, during National HBCU Week, there were many tributes about the work of these great colleges and universities, about the impact they have made in the lives of so many people across this country and the impact they have made on many, many lives.

While this week was a chance to recognize the many ways HBCUs contribute to our society, our recognition shouldn't stop at one week. We should honor their work by continuing the conversation for how we can support these institutions for years and years to come.

HBCUs have given a gift—a gift of education and an opportunity—to so many in Alabama and across our Nation. I hope my colleagues join me and Senator SCOTT in recognizing their tremendous, tremendous impact on a lot of young lives of people all across our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I, along with Senator MORAN and Senator MURRAY, be permitted to complete our remarks before the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I am here today to talk about the crisis in Afghanistan and to honor the distinguished service of those who gave the last full measure of their devotion protecting Americans there.

For the last month, Americans have watched, horrified, at the scenes of chaos and terror and bloodshed: Americans trapped at the Kabul Airport, terrified as the enemy closed in; innocent civilians fleeing for their lives, abandoned by their government; a young man desperately clinging to a departing plane's landing gear, he was so desperate to escape, only to fall then to his tragic death; 13 marines, the pride of our Nation, cut down by terrorists, never to see home again; and, then, as American planes finally departed, hundreds of American civilians left behind to the enemy.

Let me say that again: hundreds of American civilians left behind to the enemy.

And after all of that, who can forget the image of the President of the

United States, declaring this mission that he planned, that he executed, that he oversaw—this mission that left 13 marines dead, that left hundreds of American civilians behind enemy lines; this mission that resulted in chaos and terror and bloodshed—who can forget this President saying that this mission was, and I quote, “extraordinarily successful”?

An extraordinary success—really? Has a Commander in Chief in American history ever before uttered words like that? Has a Commander in Chief ever celebrated as “successful”—“successful”—the abandonment of American civilians to an enemy, the death of American soldiers, terrorizing of American citizens and American allies?

I hope I will not live to ever hear again in my lifetime such shameful and disgraceful words from a President of the United States.

And make no mistake, this President is a disgrace. His behavior is disgraceful. He has dishonored this country with his shameful leadership in this crisis, and it is time for him to resign. And if he had the responsibility of leadership, he would resign for the crisis that he has himself led this Nation into and the responsibility he bears for the lives that have been lost and for the American citizens who are, even now as I speak, trapped in Afghanistan, left to the enemy because of his failures and his shameful, disgraceful leadership.

Even the shameful performance of America's leaders cannot disguise or cover over the heroism of America's soldiers, and I want to talk about one of those soldiers now. He was Marine Corps LCpl Jared Schmitz. He was from Missouri.

He was from Wentzville, in St. Charles County, to be exact, and he had wanted to be a marine since he was a teenager. Lance Corporal Schmitz was only 6 months old when terrorists attacked this country on September 11, 2001. He wasn't old enough to remember the beginnings of this long war in which he would go on to so valiantly serve. He had only graduated from high school, from Fort Zumwalt South High School, in 2019.

Jared signed up to join the Marines shortly before his 18th birthday. He had dreamed of it since before his sophomore year. He began training with recruits even before he enlisted. He wanted to serve this Nation because he was a man who served others. His father said Jared was always smiling nonstop. He brought light and hope to every place he went, and he wanted to bring those gifts and service to his country—and he did.

He was a fine marine. He was sent on his first deployment to Jordan earlier this year and then received orders to Afghanistan. Jared Schmitz, Lance Corporal Schmitz, was there on August 26—there at the Kabul airport, doing his duty, serving his country, smiling nonstop when the enemy attacked. And it was there that Lance Corporal Schmitz, age 20, gave his life for the