

That has fueled, in the opinion of people like former Democratic economists, office holders—Larry Summers, for example, who said that we are risking a growth of inflation, which will raise prices on commodities and things that people need in their daily lives in order to live and thus form an invisible tax.

As it stands today, our debt is roughly 107 percent of our gross domestic product—\$28.7 trillion and counting. Most of us can't imagine what a trillion dollars is, much less a billion dollars, but it is roughly \$28.7 trillion. And the sad news is, somebody is going to have to pay that back—somebody. I believe it is simply immoral for us to continue spending, borrow money, raise the debt, and expect future generations to pick up the tab. We know, at the same time, families are being hammered by inflation, as I said, and small businesses are still trying to lure employees back to work.

So we are not going to assist with an encore performance of the partisan spending spree that we saw earlier this year. If our Democratic colleagues believe this partisan tax-and-spending spree is a wise investment for the American people, they are going to have to sell it to the American people and up the credit limit on their own.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, border security is one of the government's most important responsibilities. A sovereign, successful Nation's self-determination and safety depend upon it, and we are no exception.

Our border security rests exclusively with the Federal Government. And the Department of Homeland Security—a Cabinet created in 2002, I believe, in the aftermath of the September 11 attack—is entrusted with this paramount duty of protecting our border.

Fusing homeland with security for its name wasn't an accident. That wordage casts the Department's purpose to protect the country from external threats, both from people and from products. And Americans pay for that Department handsomely and for its responsibilities about \$52 billion a year.

However, a grave, unprecedented crisis exists at our southern border. Our television reminds us of that fact daily. Foreign nationals are illegally crossing into our country from Mexico by the thousands every day. I heard recently that last month was the biggest number coming in for over 20 years. But illegal immigration isn't the only crime cascading over our borders.

Mexican cartels are importing deadly drugs and trafficking humans. These horrific, unabated events make very clear that the cartels effectively control our southern border. They actually manage who and what enters our country from Mexico.

But the danger is preventable. The trouble exists because the current ad-

ministration deliberately refuses to secure the border.

Homeland Security's border dereliction is inexcusable, and it happens to be life-threatening, not only from drugs but from criminals and for national security because terrorists have been arrested.

Communities across all States, then, are plagued by the crime and the drugs killing Americans by the tens of thousands every year. The figure from 2020 is over 93,000 Americans dying from drug overdoses—a 31-percent increase from just the previous year. That exceeds the Rose Bowl's capacity, as just one example of comparison.

One drug is very prolific: Mexican fentanyl, probably fentanyl coming through Mexico from China. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid. It is 50 times more potent than heroin. An infinitesimal amount, even as small as a grain of salt, can cause a death. The cartels are producing the deadly drug and smuggling it into the United States at record highs. They are also adding fentanyl to other drugs for increased potency and, of course, increased profits—often without the user of that drug even knowing that fact—and sometimes even market that fentanyl-laced drug into heroin.

Unsurprisingly, then, deaths result. From January 2019 to June of 2019, almost 62 percent of the overdose deaths involved a fentanyl-related substance.

The authority scheduling fentanyl analogs expire next month. Congress must act to permanently schedule these drugs and punish the cartels and the drug dealers who spread this poison across our communities.

We are a nation of compassion, but we are also a nation of laws. We are not obligated under any charade of compassion to ignore border crime, particularly the surge of deadly drugs killing tens of thousands here each year. But the government, as we see, sits idly by as cartel drugs poison Americans and unleash drug-related violence upon our communities.

Border security is essential in keeping our public safety threats and a cartel-controlled border presents our greatest criminal threat.

The Federal Government must be a staunch ally to the States in stopping the crime. The cartels benefit immensely from an unsecured border, and they are not exactly screening for threats to our national security and public safety.

We have reached a critical juncture and must choose who actually controls the southern border, and, consequently, our self-determination and our safety. Violent drug cartels or home security—which is it? The choice directs our future.

#### AFGHANISTAN

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on another matter, today, I speak to my fellow colleagues on the extraordinary courage, bravery, and patriotism that

the men and women in our Armed Forces showed to the entire world, yet again, in the last several months in Afghanistan.

Now, we see plenty of evidence that they were placed in an impossible situation because of the bad judgment and leadership failures of President Biden.

Despite President Biden's bad judgment, our men and women in uniform again exceeded expectations. In the process of doing their job for people whom they don't even know, we lost 13 of our best who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country, and 18 more suffered serious injuries.

I pray—and I assume all Americans pray—for their families for the loss that those families have suffered.

Those 13 young men and women will never, and should never, be forgotten. They are heroes.

This disastrous exit was entirely avoidable, which makes the loss of life even more gut-wrenching.

Intelligent and honest people can disagree on whether the Americans should have left Afghanistan, but it is unthinkable that anyone could justify the manner in which this administration carried out this disaster.

The Biden administration left Americans behind. This is the United States of America. We never leave our people behind. I have heard from many Iowans who are outraged by this moral failure.

When he took office, President Biden arrogantly announced that "America is back." Now the world is seeing America in retreat. The Russians and Red China are crowing over this comedy.

I and others have compared the imagery and the perception to the fall of Saigon. But, remember, in that case, we had pulled our military out before we broke our promises to the South Vietnamese military.

In this case, it appears that crucial support for the Afghan military was withdrawn while we were relying on that same military to hold off the Taliban long enough to complete our withdrawal.

I have been at many briefings related to President Biden's Afghan exit. I have tasked my oversight and policy staff to do the same. Some have been classified briefings; others were not classified. What I can say—and what I believe the American people ought to know—is that this administration couldn't track the state of play on the ground in the way that they should have had the capability to do.

Every briefing gave a more dire and desperate picture than the one briefing we received before. It was obvious that this administration was losing control. Yet it was clear to me and my colleagues that the administration never sufficiently changed its posture in the region as the facts on the ground changed from bad to worse.

When the administration officials were questioned about this strategy, they often publicly responded that what they were doing was based on Presidential-level decisions.

Joe Biden owns this disastrous exit, plain and simple. But, also, Secretary Austin, Secretary Blinken, and General Milley are not without blame.

The exit has realized the worst fears of every Afghan who, over 20 years, learned to dream of peace, and every naysayer who said: Wait, and they will leave. Our enemies were right, and now we have left.

The Biden administration certainly left the women of Afghanistan behind. They are once again being beaten, killed in the streets for supposed crimes, such as daring to speak, wanting an education, not covering their faces, and, in some cases, simply walking in public.

The Biden administration, in its hasty exit, effectively armed the Taliban with advanced American military weaponry that is now being used to oppress the Afghan people. The Taliban is now patrolling our streets in Kabul in American vehicles, wearing American uniforms, and carrying American-made weapons.

Some of the violent terrorists released by the Obama administration are now in political leadership roles in this Taliban regime. Other members of the Taliban leadership have remained on the FBI's most wanted list, and they have been on that list for many years, including one with a \$10 million bounty. Now, if this were a movie script, nobody would believe it.

In addition to the equipment and the funds, it is crucial that we remember the human cost in Afghanistan. We lost 2,461 servicemembers, 18 of whom came from my State of Iowa. We also lost 3,846 contractors, 66,000 American military and police, 1,144 allied servicemembers, 444 aid workers, and 72 journalists. These numbers hit home. They hit deep. And we should never forget them.

These numbers also don't account for the stain on our national reputation for blatantly disregarding the welfare of the Afghan people who fought alongside us to help us accomplish our mission there. Leaving behind allies will have consequences that will affect our ability to build coalitions in the future. It will negatively impact our ability to defeat future enemies.

Looking through the negatives, the heartache and the pain that our country has suffered from this terribly executed exit, I remain hopeful. Where the Biden administration has failed, we have seen veterans and current mem-

bers of our armed services filling the leadership gap. Where our government didn't keep its promise by working together, these veterans and current members of our armed services and the groups associated with them quickly built ad hoc networks to ensure their Afghan brothers-in-arms and their families were able to leave their crumbling country safely.

Americans have been inspired by reports of Operation Pineapple Express, organized by special operations veterans who, without even being asked or without even asking for permission, helped hundreds of Afghan allies and their families to safety.

One of the more inspiring stories from this disastrous exit involved an Afghan family being guided by his former U.S. marine brother to Abbey Gate at the Kabul airport. The Afghan family was instructed by the U.S. Marine veterans to carry signs with them that invoked Marine Corps phrases that our marines at Abbey Gate would understand but the Taliban would not understand.

After several attempts, the marines on the wall saw the signs and were able to retrieve the family and escort them through Abbey Gate only moments before the suicide attack that took the lives of 11 marines, a Navy corpsman, a U.S. soldier, and scores and scores of Afghan civilians.

When the Marine Corps veteran network was eventually able to make contact with the interpreter, he was asked if he and his family were all right. His reply was, "Of course I'm good. I'm with marines."

Now, that is just one story, but this isn't the only amazing story regarding our veterans and our servicemembers. Pictures that were taken during this time show the desperation of the Afghan people: mothers desperately throwing their children to American troops in the hope that even if the parents couldn't reach safety, their children could. These pictures also show the pure hearts of these American warriors whom we honor.

During this 20-year conflict, our service men and women have never wavered in their duty to God and country, consistently showing their ability to annihilate the enemy. They defeated the Taliban, liberated the people of Afghanistan, and protected our country from further terrorist attacks for 20 years.

During their final hours in Kabul, our young warriors did something unimagi-

nable for almost any other country's military: They injected humanity into the dark fringes of a war-torn conflict during a mass evacuation. We have seen the pictures of marines in full battle attire holding crying infants. We have seen our servicemembers giving the shirts off their backs to keep children warm. This stands in contrast to the actions of political leaders thousands of miles away here, where we stand this very day.

Despite the Taliban's most recent acts of barbarism, the Biden administration has begun discussing potential recognition of the Taliban as a government. The possibility of taxpayer-funded foreign aid has been dangled as a carrot to incentivize their good behavior. This is pure naivete on the part of anybody in this administration thinking about that.

The Biden administration's string of foreign policy blunders has created a domino effect that Americans will feel for years to come. Afghanistan could once again become the epicenter for terrorist activities that will launch future attacks on our Nation—hopefully not another 9/11. I pray that my concerns will not become reality, but somehow I have to have fear that they will be reality. At the very least, Americans' credibility on the world stage with our allies, even with our enemies, has taken a huge hit.

In the unfortunate event that our worst fears come to light, my solace is in the knowledge that our service men and women continue to have the strength to overcome the failures of our own political leaders.

So, to my fellow Americans, let us never forget the sacrifices of our men and women in the armed services and the sacrifices that that means for protecting our freedom and security. Their service and sacrifice have been of immeasurable value. All Americans owe a debt to them that can never fully be repaid.

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ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10:15 A.M.  
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10:15 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:54 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, September 16, 2021, at 10:15 a.m.