

this, that “we should keep 2,500 troops” in Afghanistan.

The President of the United States:

No. No one said that to me that I can recall.

That is not true. That is not true.

During that same interview, George Stephanopoulos said:

We’ve got, like, 10,000 to 15,000 Americans in the country. . . . Are you committed to making sure that [American] troops stay until every American who wants to [leave gets] out?

That was the question.

The President said:

Yes.

I am quoting him:

If there’s American citizens left, we’re gonna stay—

The military is going to stay— [until we] get them all out.

That is a quote from the President of the United States. That wasn’t true.

In a later interview, the President mentioned that al-Qaida is all gone from Afghanistan. That isn’t true. We know that.

The President also said that our NATO allies:

Every one of them knew and agreed with the decision I made to end, jointly end, our involvement in Afghanistan.

That is not true. That is not true.

Then the President and his advisers—the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy most recently—have been highlighting this incredible, over-the-horizon capability to go after terrorists whom we still have in Afghanistan. That, we know, has been greatly diminished. We have heard that from the military leaders who know these issues. So even on that issue, they are not leveling with the American people.

These are not small, marginal misstatements I am talking about; these are dramatic, obvious falsehoods that go to the very heart of the foreign policy fiasco we have all witnessed. These are life-and-death deceptions that the President of the United States told the American people and he told the world.

Here is the thing: The American people, the people in Britain, the people in our NATO ally countries, the leaders in countries that are adversaries—everybody knows that these statements were false.

One of the many things that are so harmful to come out of this, because of these kinds of statements—when they come from the Commander in Chief, this undermines the credibility and honor of the United States of America in front of the rest of the world. That is one of the major reasons why so many of my fellow Alaskans and our fellow Americans are so upset by this Biden debacle.

There are going to be more hearings next week in the Armed Services Committee. We are finally going to have open hearings. What we will need are straight, truthful answers from the witnesses, particularly those in uniform, who are not obligated to cover

for the Commander in Chief’s unwise decisions or blatant falsehoods. To the contrary, these witnesses will need to tell the truth—will need to tell the truth.

Speaking of the truth, Mr. President, here is one truth that, to me, has been clear for months, and I have been talking about it for months, and it is even more relevant and urgent today in light of this foreign policy fiasco in Afghanistan. The Biden administration’s budget is dangerous to America.

Take a look at it, America. This is a \$6 trillion budget—\$6 trillion budget—where almost every Federal Agency in the U.S. Government gets a big increase in its budget; some 40 percent, 20 percent; all this green; double digits for most. Two Agencies—two Agencies—in this Biden budget blowout actually get cuts. Adjusted for inflation, they are cuts. Which are they? The Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security.

If you are looking at the border right now, you know that Homeland Security doesn’t need a budget cut, and we certainly, in this time of increasing danger globally, don’t need the Department of Defense cut, but that is what this administration is doing right now.

Like the President’s actions and statements on Afghanistan, this budget is divorced from reality because here is the reality: We have a growing threat from international terrorism once again as Afghanistan once again has become a safe haven for some of the most dangerous, violent, extremist organizations on the planet. We know it. We see it. The Taliban, the Haqqani network, ISIS-K, al-Qaida—they are all celebrating, and they are all coming back to Afghanistan, and guess what they are doing. They are plotting against this great country. It didn’t have to be this way, but that is the reality.

Here is another reality: After watching this administration’s chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, our adversaries are going to test Joe Biden’s will in other areas of the world. It is going to happen—Russia with regard to Ukraine or the Baltics or Poland; Iran with regard to Israel, which the terrorist leaders in that country continue to say they want to wipe off the face of the Earth; and, of course, communist China, with Taiwan. As some of you may have seen, during the Biden Afghanistan debacle, China started rattling its saber as it relates to Taiwan for this very reason.

Let me underscore this again. The weakness and lack of resolve demonstrated by the Biden administration in Afghanistan and this very weak military budget is likely, I think—very likely, unfortunately—to invite aggression by our adversaries in other parts of the world.

Here is my message to the President and his team: You better be ready for this. You better be strong. And being strong starts with supporting a Department of Defense budget that is not cut-

ting our readiness, as this one clearly does, and actually matches the realities of the more dangerous world we now find ourselves in because of this President’s foreign policy incompetence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, 8 months into the humanitarian crisis at the southern border, our Democratic colleagues are finally, finally paying attention. This is after 1.2 million migrants have arrived since President Biden took office, which apparently did not raise any particular alarms. Neither did the countless numbers of migrants who endured abuse at the hands of criminal organizations and human smugglers.

Our colleagues didn’t spring into action either when the processing center in Donna, TX, reached 1,600 percent capacity earlier this year, and they didn’t show much concern about the fact that the surge had left huge security gaps along our border, making it easier for the drug cartels to move heaven knows what into our country. Actually, we do know what they moved into the country because more than 90,000 Americans died of drug overdoses last year, principally from illegal drugs imported across the U.S.-Mexico border.

Finally, our Democratic colleagues seem to be paying some attention.

Over the last several days, more than 15,000 migrants, primarily Haitians, have arrived at Del Rio, TX, a town of about 35,000 people—15,000 migrants in a town of 35,000. You can imagine what sort of reaction they have had. These migrants have set up camp under the International Bridge, and Border Patrol, State, and local officials have been working around the clock to ease the humanitarian crisis. Of course, the first concern in 100-degree temperatures is to try to help protect these migrants, making sure they have food and water and that people don’t die of heat stroke.

I want to thank the Border Patrol, which does a lot of good work, and a lot of the good work it does is to save the lives of migrants who are suffering from exposure or injury and have been left behind by the coyotes, but it is also the law enforcement arm of the Federal Government to secure the border.

So the Border Patrol, local, and State law enforcement and everyone seem to come together to meet the surge of migrants in Del Rio, but like the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, these men and women have been operating in crisis mode for months and are expected to carry the weight of a crisis that everybody knew was coming.

As the Biden administration races to respond to the crisis now, finally, I am left wondering: Why didn’t they see this coming? After all, 1.2 million migrants have crossed our border just

since Joe Biden put his hand on the Bible and took the oath of office on January 20. The President campaigned, actually, on the promises of policies that were certain to lead to a surge of migrants at the border, and that is just what we have seen.

When the President and Director Mayorkas and Vice President HARRIS say, “Don’t come,” the migrants see people pouring across the border in the hundreds of thousands and successfully making their way into the interior of the United States. The human smugglers—the criminal organizations that move migrants from their homes across the border—are getting rich. They are whispering in the ear of the migrants and saying: These people made it. You can make it too. Just give me my money.

Earlier this year, a woman who crossed the Rio Grande on a smuggler’s raft said the Biden administration was the reason that she and her 1-year-old son attempted the dangerous journey at all.

She said: “That gave us the opportunity to come.”

Some of the closest followers of the President’s words and the administration’s actions are the cartels and criminal organizations that get rich off of the backs of these migrants. Actually, it is pretty good money. Let’s say, on average, these migrants and their families pay \$5,000. It varies depending upon where you want to come from. If you want to come from a little farther away, it is a little more expensive. If you are a little closer to the border, it is a little cheaper. But let’s say, on average, it is \$5,000. If you multiply 1.2 million migrants times \$5,000, that is a huge windfall to these criminal organizations. It is good business. It is a great business model.

But migrants suffer at the hands of these cartels and human smugglers. They often arrive malnourished and are suffering from exposure. Many young women and girls have been sexually assaulted. Some of these young girls even arrive pregnant. There are hundreds of young women who are in Del Rio, under the bridge, who are now pregnant. And some of them don’t make it at all.

In Brooks County, TX, which is where Falfurrias is—it is an interior checkpoint by the Border Patrol—the practice of the smugglers, the coyotes, is to get people across the river, put them in a stash house, which you have probably seen some pictures of, and then, when the coast is clear, put them in a truck or some vehicle and drive them up the road, past the checkpoint. Before they get to the checkpoint, they say to the migrants: Get out of the car. Here is a gallon milk jug we have filled full of water. Here are some protein bars. We will meet you on the other side of the checkpoint.

Now, some of the land around Falfurrias, where these checkpoints are located, is some of the most difficult territory you can possibly imagine, es-

pecially during the summer. Actually, the Vice President, when she was in the Senate—KAMALA HARRIS—and I sponsored a bill to reimburse Brooks County, TX, for burying the bodies of unidentified migrants who died while trying to make that trip around the checkpoint in Falfurrias. They certainly couldn’t afford it as they have a very modest tax base.

The cartels are always looking for a business opportunity and an opportunity to make a sales pitch to very receptive ears. When they see the Biden administration releasing migrants into the interior, they use that information to convince others to spend the money it takes to make the dangerous journey north and, certainly, when the Biden administration releases people and tells them: “Come back later for a court hearing” or “Here is a Notice to Report. When you get to where you are going, turn yourself in to ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement.” Of course, it should be no surprise that many, many, do not show up; they do not report; and they are never heard from again unless they commit a serious crime. Then it is discovered that they have illegally entered the United States and have failed to show up for their court hearings.

The point is, once these people make it into the United States, you had better believe they are on the phone—with text messages, emails—talking to their relatives back in their home countries. And what do they tell them? They say: I made it. I made it, and you can too. So they keep coming.

Well, as I said, this is big business for the cartels. They get rich off of the migrants, of course.

Second, when they flood the border with all of these migrants—these huge numbers—it overwhelms the Border Patrol just with unaccompanied children alone. In the Rio Grande Valley Sector, the Border Patrol Chief said he has had to take as many as 40 percent of the Border Patrol off of the border just to take care of and to process these unaccompanied children.

And what do the cartels do? Well, they are not stupid. They are actually pretty smart, and they know, when the Border Patrol is not guarding the border, that this is a tremendous opportunity to move their illegal drugs across the border into the United States. This isn’t just some conspiracy theory; this is a tried and true tactic of the narcos.

Earlier this week, the administration admitted to congressional staff that this was a coordinated effort by the cartels to direct Haitian migrants to a single location and overwhelm the Customs and Border Protection. In other words, this entire surge was orchestrated by a bunch of criminals. They intentionally flooded one section of the border so that personnel from others would be moved. In fact, there were 400, I believe, that Chief Ortiz said he moved from other sectors of the Border Patrol to come to Del Rio to deal with

this humanitarian crisis. You had better believe the cartels took advantage of the fact that they left holes in our security along the border in order to apply their poison and move more migrants across the border.

Even though we are familiar with the tactic and we have seen it time and again, the administration still removed agents from checkpoints in the Del Rio sector to respond to the migrant surge, playing right into the hands of the cartels when they took agents off the frontline. The cartels are simply playing a game. Well, actually, they are playing three-dimensional chess while the Biden administration is playing checkers, and the cartels are continuing to get rich off of this trafficking in human beings and drugs. It is no surprise this shifting of resources is simply not sustainable. The administration continues to play Whac-A-Mole on the southern border. Every time progress is made on one crisis, another one pops up.

The administration says they are trying to control the crisis in Del Rio, and there were early statements that they would make use of title 42—a public health title—that gives the Border Patrol the authority to expel migrants based on concerns about spreading COVID-19 because these migrants are not tested; they are not vaccinated. Yet they are put on buses and sent off into the interior of the United States to contribute to the ongoing pandemic.

The administration does have tools. Title 42 would have given them the authority to turn back the migrants, at least the adults, but now, with reports that the administration continues to release migrants into the United States, this backsliding will cause this situation to repeat itself. Maybe the next surge won’t be in Del Rio. Maybe it will be in the Rio Grande Valley or El Paso or any other sector along the U.S.-Mexico border.

My State has 1,200 miles of common border with Mexico. There are 2,000 miles of common border with the United States and Mexico. So my State is feeling the disproportionate negative impact on our border communities, and they need help. Without a clear, consistent, and effective approach across the entire border, Del Rio will become the new normal.

There are a lot of questions we need to ask the administration, and I am glad that Chairman DURBIN announced that we will have an oversight hearing of the Department of Homeland Security in the coming weeks. In particular, I want to know what the administration is doing with these 15,000 individuals once they are processed by Border Patrol.

When Mr. Mayorkas says the process is working, does that mean he is taking these migrants and placing them into the interior of the United States, contrary to the earlier statements that they were going to transport these migrants by airplane back to Haiti?

I would like to know how many of these migrants are being returned

under title 42. How many of them are family units? How many have been released with a Notice to Report—this “turn yourself in to ICE” idea? How many of these individuals never report to ICE to commence their immigration court proceedings?

Most importantly, is the DHS following through on their stated intent to expel or remove these individuals? That would be real deterrence. That would discourage more people from coming.

But, if we find out that the administration and the Secretary have been lying to us—that instead of expelling these individuals they have been placing them into the interior of the United States, using this flawed catch-and-release approach—that is a serious problem. Transparency is key, and I hope we will have an opportunity to ask these questions under oath in the coming weeks.

I would also like to know if the administration plans to appeal Judge Sullivan’s ruling on the use of title 42. There is only about another week left before Judge Sullivan’s order saying that title 42 is no longer available kicks in.

It is important, especially while the pandemic is still upon us, that public health officials have this authority of title 42, because if title 42 isn’t available, the Border Patrol tells me they fear they will lose control entirely.

Title 42 has been important during the pandemic, and, as we know, the pandemic is not over.

Unless Judge Sullivan’s order is appealed and reversed, the U.S. Government will not be able to use this to expel most of the migrants, and there is no reason to believe that many people—particularly the cartels and others that benefit from illegal immigration—won’t try to ride off of Judge Sullivan’s most recent decision and obtain an injunction against the use of title 42.

Without title 42, we will once again face overcrowded processing centers and even greater humanitarian crises.

Unfortunately, the migrant surge is only a piece of the crisis in Del Rio. Those who depend on the ports of entry and the bridges at our U.S. international border are dying for lack of economic lifeline that that represents.

And so the Biden administration has been closing these ports of entry without regard for the impact on these border communities. President Biden can’t put the “Open the Border” sign out for illegal immigration, yet close the border for legitimate trade and travel. It defies common sense, and it is fundamentally unfair.

Well, there is so much more we could say, but the Biden administration can’t continue to enable these cartels or send signals to migrants encouraging them to come. This growing crisis isn’t fair to law enforcement and it isn’t fair to our border communities and it is not fair to the migrants.

We need a clear strategy from the administration that leads to results and

stops the humanitarian crisis on our own border.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to make a statement prior to the vote that is pending and that my full statement be allowed to be made prior to that.

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

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, you know, we are here at this—normally, Thursday night we wouldn’t be here under normal circumstances, but we are here because one Member of the Senate has determined to impede the entire national security infrastructure as it relates to the foreign policy of the United States.

What we do in the State Department and that which comes through the Committee on Foreign Relations has to do with the essential security of the United States. It is the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that has jurisdiction over global arms sales. It is the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that has jurisdiction over the use of force. It is the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that deals with treaties across the globe. It is the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that deals with the question of nuclear arms and proliferation and so much more.

And it is the State Department that perpetuates the national interests and security of the United States in its positions across the globe, both at home, in the first place, but across the globe.

Now, I have had plenty, over the course of 30 years of doing foreign policy work between the House and the Senate, and 16 years in the Senate—plenty of moments where I had a fundamental disagreement, a very strong one, with an administration about their policy, but I did not hold up the entire national security infrastructure of the State Department that puts at risk the Nation.

I hear all these speeches about security. You are putting at risk the Nation. Wouldn’t it be nice if we had some of the critical people—I just heard my colleague from Texas—in a position, beyond the Department of Homeland Security, to deal with the hemispheric challenges that we have on immigration in Central America, in Latin America?

The Haitians who are at the border today didn’t just come from the earthquake and disasters and assassination and hurricanes that have taken place. They have been in Latin America for quite some time. They have just made their way to the border. Wouldn’t it be nice if we had the people in place to deal—Ambassadors and others—to deal in those countries to find a way forward on how we humanely deal with that challenge?

Wouldn’t it be nice if we had the person in charge of East Asia and the Pacific to deal with our challenges with

China? This Senate came together a few months ago and said China is the single most significant national security challenge, the most significant strategic challenge we have in the world. And yet we have vacancies galore to deal with that very challenge.

I have Members who come to me and say: This company from my State is having problems with XYZ. Well, wouldn’t it be nice to be able to have an ambassador in that country to deal with the challenges of that American company or people who come to me and talk to me about their challenges in getting a loved one, somebody from their State, to be able to come? Our consular officers. Wouldn’t it be nice to have somebody in the position to deal with that?

Wouldn’t it be critical, as we deal with the questions of law enforcement and drug trafficking, to have the head of that, the Assistant Secretary, in position so that we could deal with those challenges?

So whatever view our colleague from Texas has about Nord Stream, and I happen to believe that on the substance he is right, but this procedure is wretchedly wrong because it puts us at risk in so, so many dimensions. And something will happen—something will happen somewhere in the world where we are not present because one Senator decided to hold up that nominee that would have made a difference.

We already saw it. We already saw it as we were trying to deal with challenges in our hemisphere and those that related to Afghanistan. Ridiculous.

So our colleague who is holding this all up—because these nominees overwhelmingly passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee either unanimously—hear me—unanimously or with strong bipartisan votes. We just saw the cloture vote before—77.

We are leaving these positions unfilled. The position is untenable to continue to be able to meet the challenges the State Department has in fulfilling whose interest? The interests of the American people across the globe.

So it is time to get over that. We have only passed in this body two—two—of President Biden’s ambassadorial appointments—two. This administration has been in office 9 months.

If I were to look at the same time period with President Trump, we did far better. I didn’t agree with President Trump on a whole host of foreign policy decisions, but I understood that having people in place was critical, even when I disagreed with them philosophically. It was critical to promote the national interests and security of the United States.

So it is time to get over this. These positions would normally pass by voice, much less taking hours—hours, of which, by the way, the debate is not even about the nominees or their positions. It is about immigration and this and that and the other. The debate is not even about these critical national security positions.