

The Italian man said to his son: This is one of the soldiers who saved our village.

Casey Celske turned to his son and said: All these years, I wondered what I was doing. Now I know.

UKRAINE

Madam President, after World War II, the United States and the leading free nations of Europe worked together to create a new system of rules and institutions to guard the peace of World War II and to reduce the risk in Europe that we would ever again descend into the hell of war. The most important of these new institutions was called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—NATO. Among its most important new rules was the commitment that nations must never again wage wars of conquest against their neighbors. For more than 75 years, the new rules and institutions largely helped keep the peace in Europe, but then came Ukraine.

With its barbaric attack on Ukraine, Russia is waging war not only against a sovereign nation—an innocent, unprovoked nation—Russia is attacking the very system of democracy and rules-based order for which 400,000 U.S. servicemen died in World War II and many more have given their lives since.

Vladimir Putin is seeking to restore some mythical Russian Empire. He wants to demolish NATO, and he wants to drag the world back into a blood-soaked past, when Kings and tyrants waged wars of conquest to expand their territory and fill their coffers.

As Russia's barbaric, blood-thirsty war against Ukraine enters its third month, it is clear that Vladimir Putin has miscalculated disastrously. He thought his forces were so overwhelming that he would occupy Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, in a matter of days; that he would remove Volodymyr Zelenskyy from power in Ukraine and that he would install a puppet government that would once again take orders from Moscow.

Instead, Kyiv still stands, Zelenskyy is still in control, and Vladimir Putin has been frustrated by the determination, courage, and resiliency of the Ukrainian troops. He has suffered heavy losses. Russia has lost the battle for Ukraine to date. Vladimir Zelenskyy is still Ukraine's President, and Russian forces are demoralized and depleted.

Instead of seizing Kyiv and all of Ukraine, Russia is now regrouping to try to pick one region that they can conquer, the Donbas region—which they have illegally occupied since 2014—and to seize the Black Sea Port of Mariupol.

Russia's economy is increasingly staggering under the weight of some of the most powerful sanctions ever levied against any nation in the history of the world. The effect of these sanctions against Russia will become even more onerous in the months ahead as Russia is unable to buy parts and equipment

to keep its basic industries thriving and other key sectors of its economy functioning.

The sanctions also target the oligarchs, the kleptocrats, Putin's fraternity who helped prop up his corrupt regime. They are losing their super-yachts— isn't that a heartbreaker—their vacation dachas, and some are starting to lose their lives—strangely, a fate that seems to befall a number of people who get close to Russia's KGB thug who happens to be the leader in Russia today.

The Russian Government has given up any pretense it once had after the breakup of the Soviet Union of ever becoming a democracy. I say that with some sadness for the people of Russia. They have been relegated to the role of pawns in Putin's escapade.

A new censorship law has taken effect. It makes it a crime punishable by up to 15 years in prison to even describe the invasion of Ukraine as a "war" or to describe Russia's assault on Ukraine in honest terms. You can go to prison for that in Mr. Putin's Russia.

It was just a few weeks ago that I met upstairs in my office with a Russian journalist and opposition leader. His name is Vladimir Kara-Murza. Mr. Kara-Murza is fearless. He survived poisoning attempts by the Kremlin twice. He told me several weeks ago, "I'm going back."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "There is work to be done."

He told me about his opposition to Russia's war in Ukraine, the increasing opposition to the war with Russia, and his hopes that some day Russia will be a part of the community of democracies. Well, Mr. Kara-Murza went back to Moscow, and last week, he was arrested—the same day CNN broadcast an interview in which he called Putin's government "a regime of murderers." Mr. Kara-Murza faces years of imprisonment for simply telling the truth.

Senator MARCO RUBIO of Florida and I are going to introduce a bipartisan resolution this week calling for Mr. Kara-Murza's immediate release. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join us.

Vladimir Putin also badly miscalculated the unity of NATO and the will of free people to defend democracy. Instead of shattering NATO, Putin has strengthened NATO. Finland and Sweden, longtime neutral nations, could soon join NATO. Germany is pursuing a historic dramatic overhaul of its approach to security and defense. And yesterday, French voters re-elected their President, Emmanuel Macron, decisively, choosing him over his far-right Putin sympathizer, Marine Le Pen. That election in France marked the first time in 20 years that French voters have given a President a second term. It is widely viewed as, among other things, a vote of support for NATO and Ukraine and against Putin and his Russian aggression.

Vladimir Putin also gambled that America would be too weak and divided

to oppose Russia's assault on Ukraine. He was badly mistaken again. Republicans and Democrats are standing together in support of Ukraine, as are the American people.

President Biden's leadership has been critical in uniting NATO and the West and enabling Ukraine to defend itself. Yesterday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin traveled to Kyiv and met with President Zelenskyy personally to show Putin and the world that the United States of America stands with the Ukrainian people in their heroic defense of their homeland.

The U.S. is providing Ukraine with the military equipment to defend itself, but it takes the courage and determination of those men and women in Ukraine to make it work. In the last 2 months alone, America has committed to Ukraine an unprecedented \$3.7 billion in military equipment, including howitzers, helicopters, ammunition, tactical drones, and more. Ukraine's Armed Forces are using this equipment and performing brilliantly.

The coming weeks will be difficult, and they may be decisive. In concentrating its assault on the Donbas, Russia is moving the war from cities like Kyiv and Kharkiv to a more wide-open landscape where its heavy artillery seems to have an advantage. In addition, many intelligence reports suggest that Putin is desperate for something he can call a military win by May 8, which Russia celebrates as "Victory Day," marking the Allies' defeat over Nazi Germany in World War II.

The tragic irony is that in this war, Russia is using many of the same tactics used in World War II: attacking a peaceful neighboring nation, intentionally targeting civilians, and committing heinous war crimes.

This Senate voted unanimously last month to condemn Vladimir Putin as a war criminal. We must continue to stand with Ukraine and for democracy and for the rules of civilization where so many Americans fought for and died in World War II and since.

I started these comments on the floor this afternoon remembering a World War II vet in Illinois that just passed away at the age of 98, Lorenzo Cervantes. I have spoken to so many of those vets and said: What were you fighting for?

And they said: We were fighting for our buddies right next to us. We were going to bring each other home safe, so we kept the fight. And we were fighting for our families. We believed our family name was at stake, and the courage we showed reflected on them. And we also were fighting for our nation, the United States, which we were proud to serve and risk our lives for. But most of all, we were fighting to make sure our kids didn't have to do the same. We were willing to sacrifice, even give our lives, so our kids could live in a peaceful world.

Well, for almost 80 years that was a fact after World War II and the service

of Lorenzo Cervantes and hundreds of thousands of others. And then came Vladimir Putin with this unprovoked attack on Ukraine. He thought they would be a pushover. He had this massive Russian army mobilizing over a span of months ready to attack. And when he launched his attack, he expected the people of Ukraine to fold, quit, and leave. But they didn't. They fought and they have been an inspiration ever since.

Putin wants to write a new world order. He wants to say to the living veterans of World War II and their families: You wasted your time. I can do this if I wish. I have the power. But he has run into a force he didn't anticipate. The Ukrainians have done an incredible job, an inspiring job to the world.

And I want, of course, to say a word of praise to their President. Mr. Zelenskyy started in life as a stand-up comedian. Somehow or another, he has become the world's leading stand-up President—standing up to a tyrant like Vladimir Putin, inspiring people all around the world to join in this effort to save his nation.

I am glad that the United States is on board, and we will continue to help him until Putin is finally gone. The genocide which he is inflicting on the Ukrainian people is an embarrassment to the 21st century. To think that this could happen in the so-called civilized western world is virtually unthinkable. We have got to make a stand, and I am glad that we have. I support President Biden and the NATO alliance who are standing behind the people of Ukraine.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING ORRIN G. HATCH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, as the Senate convenes today, we are mourning the loss of our dear friend and legendary former colleague, Orrin Hatch.

When Senator Hatch retired 3 years ago, this body lost its longest serving Republican and its President pro tem. We also lost one of the kindest and best humored colleagues any of us had ever served with and, for that matter, the Senate's only former band manager of a Mormon folk music group.

Orrin Hatch led an incredibly full, interesting, and accomplished life. By the end of his tenure, our very funny colleague liked to poke fun at his own longevity. I remember when Orrin, a former Judiciary Committee chairman, would pretend to wistfully recall his work on Justice Joseph Story's confirmation back in 1811.

Humor aside, the reality was impressive enough. Orrin's dogged service for Utah and our Nation was a constant in this Chamber for 42 years. He was an accomplished, influential chairman of three major committees: HELP, Judiciary, and Finance. He was an essential legislator behind a long list of landmark laws—from the Hatch-Waxman law on generic drugs in the 1980s to the Americans with Disabilities Act, to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and the State Children's Health Insurance Program—all back in the 1990s—all the way through to the historic 2017 tax reform that Orrin shepherded as Finance chairman. That helped engineer the best economic moment for American workers and families in modern history. There were also countless specific achievements for the great State of Utah that Orrin loved so much.

Amid all that legislative heavy lifting, Orrin was also a pivotal player concerning the Senate's part in the personnel business. Amazingly, at the time of Orrin's retirement, he had personally participated in the confirmations for more than half—half—of all the article III judges who had ever served in American history.

Orrin came into the Senate as a young, conservative firebrand. His first campaign for any public office of any kind was the 1976 campaign that landed him here. He left the Senate as a widely admired and universally liked elder statesman. His legacy is peppered with both big, principled victories, bipartisan collaborations, and a roster of friends that spanned the entire political spectrum and sometimes transcended politics altogether.

But there was never any confusing what Orrin viewed as his proudest accomplishment of all. That would be his remarkable marriage to Elaine and their loving family. Alphabetical order has perhaps never served any man better than when "Hatch, Orrin" was assigned the chair next to "Hansen, Elaine" in a Brigham Young University classroom. Decades later, Orrin said, "I can't remember a doggone thing from that astronomy class," but the two of them got 65 inspiring years of marriage and a big, happy brood of kids and grandkids out of the bargain.

So, today, the entire Senate stands with Elaine, the Hatch family, and the huge, huge network of friends, former staffers, and admirers whom Orrin leaves behind across Utah and across our country. We mourn this great loss, and we honor this great life.

INFLATION

Madam President, on an entirely different matter, the Senate reconvenes today, after Passover and Easter, to begin a new work period, but, unfortunately, the biggest problem facing the American people is still the same as it has been all year long. Rising inflation is continuing to inflict painful consequences on working families across our country. This painful problem isn't getting better; it is still getting worse.

Last month, consumer prices clocked an 8.5-percent year-on-year increase.

Inflation is now rising at its fastest pace in more than four decades. The surge is being led in large part by a 23.6-percent jump in airfares, a 35.3-percent increase in used car and truck prices, and a 48-percent spike in the cost of gasoline. These are exactly the sorts of products consumers lean on most heavily in the warmer months.

But, while March's numbers are an extra cruel twist, the American people have been feeling the effects of the Biden administration's war on domestic energy for the better part of a year. Before most folks even began to consider summer travel and long before Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine, working families were already facing soaring prices at the gas pump.

Even as wage growth accelerated for a fifth straight month, workers' paychecks once again failed to keep pace with the steep surge of rising prices. Raises and bonuses are being swallowed by inflation. Real wages are down 2.7 percent year-on-year.

Democrats' runaway spending has brought us runaway inflation. Prices in the United States have risen higher and faster than in other developed economies. Even the New York Times now admits that "risks are mounting that America's ambitious spending will end up with a checkered legacy." Let me say that again. Even the New York Times now admits that "risks are mounting that America's ambitious spending will end up with a checkered legacy."

But even in the face of this painful reality, even as every measurable indicator spells out the clear consequences of reckless runaway spending, Washington Democrats are showing no sign of changing course. President Biden's response to the shaky economy he created is to propose the biggest tax hike in American history and double-digit percentage growth in domestic discretionary spending.

Democrats' policies have working families deep in a financial hole, and our colleagues across the aisle just want to keep digging.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING ORRIN G. HATCH

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, before I begin the substance of my remarks today, I wanted to note how the Senate mourns the loss of one of its fine public servants. Senator Orrin Hatch, the longest serving Republican in the history of the Senate, the sixth longest serving Member ever, passed away Saturday at the age of 88.