

Yesterday, a number of us received a classified briefing from the White House about Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. It was sobering. Russia continues to indiscriminately target civilian populations and infrastructure, killing tens of thousands of innocent people in Ukraine, leaving countless more in the bitter dark and cold without access to electricity, water, or heat.

The briefing was also astonishing because it raised a bigger question: What has Vladimir Putin really accomplished with this cruel war?

I will tell you the answer.

Today, as a result of Putin's barbaric invasion of Ukraine, the Western alliance in opposition to him is stronger than ever before. Putin's actions have strengthened the resolve of the Ukrainian people to fight to the death for a free and democratic country, as they press back against the Russian occupation and regain territory from Kharkiv to Kherson.

Moreover, NATO is now stronger and more united, with two new countries, valuable additions to the NATO alliance—Sweden and Finland—soon to join the fold. And just this week, NATO also recommitted to continuing support for Ukraine.

Countries have rallied behind the United States in sending everything from weapons to helmets, to medical supplies, to food, and in imposing crushing sanctions that are taking a massive toll on the Russian economy.

Yesterday's briefing also made one thing abundantly clear: Now is not the time for the United States or NATO to back down. While Putin deceived himself into thinking the Ukrainian people would fold and welcome the Russian military with open arms, or that Kyiv could fall in days, the Ukrainian people—and their desire for sovereignty and self-rule—have prevailed.

The world stepped up to help secure their freedom, bound together by the shared principles and international norms that dictators like Putin can never and will never wipe away.

The day will come when Putin and his thugs are held accountable for their war crimes, and, sadly, there are many.

Since February, the United States alone has committed billions of dollars in aid to Ukraine, with defense articles delivered at record-breaking speed to support Ukrainian war efforts on the frontlines. And just weeks ago, the White House requested another supplemental aid request for Ukraine. I support it.

Now, I understand that some Members of Congress have expressed a concern about the economic consequences of increased defense spending and whether there is appropriate oversight of the actual funds sent and spent. I share those concerns. They are legitimate. They are reasonable. And I pushed the administration to ensure that it strengthens efforts to fully account for our assistance to Ukraine.

I might just add parenthetically that over the decades that we were in war in

Afghanistan, it is well known that so many dollars were wasted, American tax dollars, in an effort to stop the forces of terrorism that were residing in that country. We should never knowingly allow that to occur, and we certainly shouldn't in Ukraine despite my wholehearted support for President Biden supporting the efforts.

I am glad my colleagues on the other side of the aisle finally joined us yesterday—yesterday—in the confirmation of Robert Storch. He is going to be the next inspector general at the Department of Defense. If you want to keep an eye out on how the money is being spent in that great and important Department, you need an inspector general. It took us months to reach the point where the Senate confirmed his nomination. He will be key to oversight.

Instead of looking for solutions, some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are vowing to stop assistance to Ukraine or slow it down in another way to obstruct the Biden administration. In doing so, they are undermining our broader foreign assistance programs and ultimately undercutting the success of Ukraine's resistance.

The Presiding Officer and I both know we have to fund the fiscal year we are currently in. It runs from October to October. We are in that fiscal year already. We know that if we do a continuing resolution, that it will be wasteful spending, and we will not be investing in the things we really need to keep America safe and strong. If we do the Omnibus bill, the Omnibus appropriations bill, we can cure that problem by having specific appropriations bills that target the money where it is needed in our future. If we don't do that, it is going to undermine assistance in many areas, including Ukraine.

We can't let leadership fail on either side of the aisle when it comes to the spending bill. As the Ukrainian people continue to fight, we must continue to stand by their side.

When the news first broke of Russia's full-scale invasion this past February, I was sitting in an airport departure lounge 800 miles away in Lithuania. Many in this Chamber have heard me speak many times about my mother, who arrived in the United States from Russian-occupied Lithuania when she was 2 years old in the year 1911. Life was bleak and oppressive for the Lithuanian people at that time. It was no wonder that my family tried to escape the Russian czar and his heavy hand. That was the case in Eastern Europe for many countries.

So it is no surprise that when the Soviet Union collapsed, many of these same nations reached out to join the community of democracies and stand with us behind the shield of NATO. We welcomed and supported Lithuania, the Baltic States, Poland, and so many other countries, as we welcome Ukraine's efforts now to stop this invasion.

Today, decades later, Lithuania is a thriving democracy and is among the many countries rallying to Ukraine's aid. I want to commend the people of Lithuania. So many times, this tiny little nation has spoken out in courageous ways to stand up for democracy and freedom. I am very proud of them and what they have done.

The free nations of the world understand Ukraine is on the frontlines in the battle for democracy over autocracy. It is a fundamental struggle between the rule of law and the rule of brute force. Now is not the time for the United States and the rest of the free world to in any way diminish their support for Ukraine. Like the Ukrainian people, we must show resolve, determination, and a commitment to fighting on and standing together in the defense of democracy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, tomorrow, Northrop Grumman and the U.S. Air Force will unveil the new B-21 bomber, a sixth-generation aircraft that will revolutionize the Air Force's long-range strike capabilities.

I had the special opportunity to see the first tails under development at Palmdale, and I am excited that this incredible feat of U.S. engineering will finally be unveiled to the American public and to our adversaries. It is an exciting day for the Air Force, and it is an especially exciting day for Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, which was chosen to be the first home—Main Operating Base 1—of the B-21 Raider.

We have come a long way at Ellsworth since I first came to the Senate. Shortly after I took office, Ellsworth was recommended for closure by the Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure Commission. So one of my first priorities as a U.S. Senator became getting Ellsworth taken off the closure list. Statistically speaking, our odds of pulling through were not high, but thanks to an all-hands effort by the congressional delegation and State and community leaders, we won the day, and we were removed from the BRAC list that August.

Then we got right to work on building up the base so we would never again find ourselves in the same position.

In 2007, the Air Force Financial Services Center opened at Ellsworth, and 2011 saw the arrival of the 89th Attack Squadron and its command and control stations for MQ-9 Reapers.

In 2015, a nearly decade-long effort paid off with the quadrupling of the

training airspace for the base. The Powder River Training Complex is now the largest training airspace in the continental United States and can be used for large-force exercises that draw combat aircraft from across the country, and it is well-suited for B-21 training. This is just one of the efforts that we undertook to put Ellsworth in the best possible position to secure the B-21 mission. I am proud that it paid off with last June's announcement that Ellsworth would become the home of the Raider.

The B-21 represents a significant step forward in our long-range strike capabilities, and it will come not a moment too soon. Between chronic underfunding and a high operational tempo during the War on Terror, our military preparedness became seriously strained.

A 2018 National Defense Strategy Commission report warned that our Nation's readiness had eroded to the point where we might struggle to win a war against a major power like Russia or China. This was not just because of the wear and tear of our own forces but also because of the significant investments being made by China and Russia in their militaries, with the intent of neutralizing our military strengths. We have made progress since then, but there is still a lot of work that needs to be done.

The importance of continued investment in our Nation's military and our technological edge cannot be overstated. The events of the past year should remind us that there will always be bad actors who represent a threat to peace and freedom, and being prepared to meet those threats is the best way of preserving peace and keeping our Nation secure.

It is disappointing that the National Defense Authorization Act—yearly legislation to authorize funding for our military and national defense—has been so low on Democrats' priority list this year. We are 2 months in fiscal year 2023; yet the Senate still hasn't taken up the 2023 bill. Democrats were more focused on spending hundreds of billions of dollars on their Green New Deal priorities than they were on passing essential legislation for our Nation's defense.

As efforts continue to negotiate a way to bring the NDAA to the floor, I hope we are able to pass a comprehensive bill that rejects the President's inadequate funding request and addresses all our key defense requirements.

As always, one of my top priorities is ensuring that each year's NDAA addresses the needs of our airmen at Ellsworth Air Force Base. I am working to ensure that the base continues to receive full funding for the many equipment and support facilities that will be needed for the B-21 Raider mission.

In late October, I had the opportunity of reviewing the progress at Ellsworth firsthand with Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall, and suffice it to say, things are going to be

very, very busy over the coming years. The B-21 training and operational missions will require significant investments in new infrastructure, including a low-observable coating restoration facility and a radio frequency facility to support the Raider's stealth properties, as well as a weapons generation facility to support its nuclear capability. The NDAA will continue this essential military construction and ensure that it remains on pace in preparation for the arrival of the B-21.

We also need to ensure Ellsworth remains a premier training space for our bombers, which is why I am pursuing a provision to require the Federal Aviation Administration to establish a pilot program to support the development of dynamic airspace. Dynamic airspace—sometimes called adaptive airspace—refers to efficiently scheduling and managing airspace and adjusting airspace boundaries as military exercises or other flights proceed through them. This concept will better enable the Pentagon to meet training requirements for aircraft like the B-21, which need larger volumes of training airspace to accommodate longer engagement distances.

As always, while we prepare for the B-21 mission, I continue to work to ensure that our B-1s at Ellsworth receive all the resources they need to remain a responsive and lethal component of Global Strike Command, as they demonstrated in the just-completed Bomber Task Force deployment to Guam.

While updated planes and equipment are essential, as always, our greatest resource is the men and women who wear the uniform. I will continue to work to improve quality of life for our Ellsworth airmen and their families.

More military families will be moving into the communities surrounding Ellsworth with the arrival of the B-21 mission, and another one of my priorities is making sure that the infrastructure is in place to provide ample support for these new families.

I worked to include a provision in this year's NDAA that would allow the Secretary of Defense to continue to adjust basic allowance for housing rates if an installation is experiencing a sudden increase in the number of service-members assigned there. This will help ensure that families at Ellsworth and elsewhere will have the resources they need to secure appropriate accommodations.

I am also working to ensure that the Douglas School District is able to integrate and support Air Force members' children and provide sufficient classroom space. I am grateful to the other members of South Dakota's congressional delegation for working with me to ensure that this year's NDAA will authorize up to \$15 million in Impact Aid funding for schools experiencing forced structure changes like the anticipated growth at Ellsworth.

I am looking forward to tomorrow's unveiling of the B-21 Raider and to that day in the near future when the

first Raider lands at Ellsworth. It is an honor to be part of building up the base and to represent the men and women of Ellsworth in the U.S. Senate.

I will continue to do everything I can to ensure that our Ellsworth airmen and our men and women in uniform in every branch of the military have everything they need to carry out their missions.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). Without objection, it is so ordered.

INTERNATIONAL TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PROTECTION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2022

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to get this body to act in the face of one of the most heinous forms of exploitation on the planet, which is human trafficking.

The year is almost over; the Congress is coming to a close; we are running out of time; and the Senate still has not passed the Menendez-Risch International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, which was reported out of the Foreign Relations Committee by voice vote over 5 months ago.

Therefore, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of calendar No. 407, S. 4171.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 4171) to reauthorize the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2022."

SEC. 2. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title.

Sec. 2. Table of contents.

TITLE I—COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING ABROAD

Sec. 101. United States support for integration of anti-trafficking in persons interventions in multilateral development banks.

Sec. 102. Expanding prevention efforts at the United States Agency for International Development.

Sec. 103. Counter-trafficking in persons efforts in development cooperation and assistance policy.

Sec. 104. Technical amendments to tier rankings.