

but Professor Blank allowed himself the luxury of thinking outside the box. He dreamed about doing the impossible, and he wrote this fairly long quote:

What if we could invent the future? It dawned on me.

Continuing to quote:

If we tried to look over the horizon, we would discover that the department could audit faster, cheaper, and more effectively by inventing future tools and techniques rather than repeating the past.

The professor envisioned a “5th generation of audit practices” to break the cycle of audit failures at the Department of Defense.

I give the professor very high grades for creativity and his search for new solutions but disagree with some of his thinking.

However, when it comes to pinpointing the root cause of unending audit failures, the professor hits the nail on the head.

So I quote from him:

[The] Department of Defense needs to lead the audit industry to create a 21st century integrated finance and accounting system, including a U.S. Standard General Ledger that provides reliable and complete data.

“Integrated systems” and “reliable data” are the magic words.

The experts, like the auditors, the financial managers, the inspector general, have known this truth for 30 years or more. They dutifully report it, wringing their hands in frustration, and then rinse and repeat the cycle from 1 year to the next year.

Now, see here. We have the mighty Pentagon that develops the most advanced weapons systems the world has ever known. Yet, when it comes to deploying basic technology like an accounting system, it is buffaloed—or is it? Maybe they want the system to work that way so nobody knows what is going on and how the money is spent.

After hundreds of billions have been poured into patching up old audit systems, the Department of Defense still can’t perform the most elementary accounting tasks in the book. They don’t capture transactions as they occur and post them to the correct accounts. So just go figure what is wrong.

Well, there once was a true sage consigned to an attic cubbyhole at the Pentagon who claimed to know the answer. That person was A. Ernest Fitzgerald. We called him Ernie. Ernie was the Management Systems Deputy of the Air Force in the Comptroller’s office. He blew the whistle on the C-5A cost overruns and, of course, got fired when President Nixon didn’t like what he testified to before the Congress of the United States.

Some years after being restored to his post—and he was restored only by court order—he was detailed to my staff for several years to lead a joint review of the internal controls over vendor payments. Ernie believed the Pentagon barons lorded over their financial fiefdoms for one reason and one

reason only: They did not want to see the status quo go away. It is pretty simple. Keeping the books in disarray gives the Department of Defense the so-called flexibility to hide overspending and other financial shenanigans.

Once upon a time, a promising fix lent credence to Ernie Fitzgerald’s theory. It was called the Defense Corporate Database/Warehouse System. It was at the threshold of success when it got torpedoed—and torpedoed by whom? By the bureaucrats in the Defense Department. That system could have been a building block for a modern accounting system that might have delivered a victory to the American taxpayer.

If the brass were truly committed to cleaning up the books, it would have happened long ago. The technology is there for the taking. To break out of the cycle of failures, we need to step back, hit the audit reset button, and chart a new course.

As a first step, Secretary of Defense Austin should hold the Chief Financial Officer accountable for failing to have an accounting system that meets statutory requirements. That is as simple as accounting 101 and accountability 101 in my book. If Secretary Austin holds the CFO’s feet to the fire, just maybe we will finally see a course correction.

As a lifelong family farmer, I can tell you that hope springs eternal at the start of every planting season. After four decades of working to weed out the fiscal mess at the Pentagon, it is a tall order to be optimistic. I am not going to give up. I am not going to give up this fight. With the help of a team of auditors under the leadership of the Government Accountability Office’s general counsel, Emmanuelli Perez, and support from our allies, maybe together we can nudge the Department in a new direction. Otherwise, expect more of the same—a colossal waste on failed audits.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. 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.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, over the weekend, the small town of Cleveland, TX—more or less in East Texas; east at least of Conroe and the Houston area—they experienced a shocking crime. We are still learning more details about the perpetrator and exactly what happened that led to such horrific bloodshed, but here is what we know right now.

Late on Friday night, 38-year-old Francisco Oropesa was firing his gun in his front yard in this rural part of the

State. His neighbor came over and asked him to stop, respectfully, because it was just about midnight and the neighbor explained he had an infant at home who was trying to get some sleep. He asked that Oropesa shoot farther away from the home, hoping to minimize the disturbance to his 1-month-old son. Oropesa refused. He said he could do anything he wanted on his property and continued shooting.

The neighbors did what anyone else would do under the circumstances: They called law enforcement. They called the police. The gunshots continued, so the neighbors called the police again, eventually calling five times.

Before police could arrive, Oropesa stormed his neighbor’s home with a gun and began firing, and he killed five people before fleeing. He remains at large. All of the victims found inside the home were killed in what law enforcement has described as execution-style shooting.

The first victim was 25-year-old Sonia Argentina Guzman, a mother of three. Sonia’s husband Wilson had been the one to go to the door and ask that the shooting stop so their 1-month-old son could get some sleep. While Sonia’s husband, infant son, and 2-year-old daughter survived the shooting, her eldest son did not. At just 9 years old, her son, Daniel Enrique Lazo Guzman, was also murdered by Oropesa. The other victims were family friends who had been at their home that evening. This includes 21-year-old Diana Velasquez Alvarado, 31-year-old Julisa Molina Rivera, and 18-year-old Jose Jonathan Casarez.

I can’t imagine the shock and grief these families are experiencing today. What they thought was just a normal Friday night surrounded by family and friends turned into a life-shattering day because of the actions of this criminal. My prayers are with these families as they search for peace, healing, and justice.

In the wake of this tragedy, Governor Abbott’s office announced that the suspect had been in the United States illegally and had been previously deported four times. He never should have been in the United States in the first place.

As devastating and unimaginable as this story is, it is not entirely unique. I remember the murder of Kate Steinle in 2015. She and her father were walking alongside a pier in San Francisco when she was shot and killed. The man who killed her was an illegal immigrant who had been deported not once, not twice, but five times. He had seven felony convictions.

I want to be abundantly clear about one point: The actions of these criminals do not and should not reflect on the tens of millions of law-abiding immigrants in this country. Any attempt to frame immigrants in general as a threat to our country is completely devoid of facts and detached from reality.

But my point in sharing these stories is to prove that there are devastating

consequences when the Biden administration simply refuses to enforce the law both at and inside of our borders.

Since President Biden took office, now about 2½ years ago, Customs and Border Protection has logged more than 5 million border crossings—an unprecedented number. Most of these individuals probably came to the United States for economic reasons, which, as we know, does not in and of itself qualify them for asylum. Some are probably escaping persecution, which will likely qualify them for asylum under the U.S. law. Some—although certainly another small percentage—are dangerous criminals who have been convicted of serious crimes.

Since October, Border Patrol has arrested more than 5,000 convicted criminals at the border who have been convicted of everything from burglary and assault to drug trafficking and murder. The big caveat to remember is, these are just the ones we know about. When thousands of migrants illegally cross the southern border every day, it completely overwhelms our border patrol and law enforcement authorities.

Law enforcement is pulled from the frontlines to help feed and care for these migrants, including unaccompanied children, creating a veritable gateway for dangerous criminals and drugs to make their way into the United States undetected.

Earlier this year, Border Patrol told news outlets that 1.2 million migrants had evaded law enforcement since President Biden took office. In other words, we know how many law enforcement encountered, but the so-called “got-aways”—1.2 million of them—we have no inkling what they are up to, whether they are economic migrants simply looking for a better life. My guess is, probably not. My guess is that they were probably either convicted criminals who knew they would not be allowed into the United States or they were people who were transiting the United States, carrying drugs into the interior.

These “got-aways”—that number is not just one pulled out of thin air. These individuals are detected by cameras, sensors, or other forms of surveillance but never arrested or processed by Border Patrol because they are simply overwhelmed. These are the ones who are running away from the Border Patrol instead of turning themselves in to claim asylum, like the majority of immigrants.

I have no idea where these 1.2 million people are or what they are doing, but neither does President Biden; neither does Customs and Border Protection; neither do any of our law enforcement Agencies know where these 1.2 million migrants are or what they are doing. Maybe, just maybe—I would say in all likelihood—inside of that number, some subset are probably murderers, rapists, child abusers with lengthy rap sheets. Maybe they are cartel members smuggling fentanyl and other dangerous drugs into our communities.

Maybe they are members of criminal gangs like MS-13 or other transnational gangs.

The truth is, President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas, as Secretary of Homeland Security, have no idea who or what is coming across our border every day.

When title 42, which, as we all know, is the public health title that has been used to expel some migrants during the pendency of the pandemic—when it expires next Thursday, the number of migrants coming across the border every day will soar, making it even easier for criminals and gang members to sneak into the United States, along with the drugs that have taken too many lives in recent years.

One hundred and eight thousand Americans died of drug overdoses last year, 71,000 from fentanyl. All that comes across the border. We know where it is coming from, but President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas have done too little to stop it. In fact, their policies have encouraged more and more people to come.

Law enforcement depends in part on deterrence, people knowing that “If I try, I am unlikely to be successful, so I am not going to try in the first place.” That is how law enforcement manages their business. But when people see no likelihood of negative consequences, they are going to keep coming, and we understand exactly why. Unfortunately, this allows dangerous individuals into the United States, and the odds of them being arrested and removed by the Biden administration are extremely low.

So this is a problem not only at the border, this is a problem once these individuals make their way inside the United States.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, otherwise known as ICE, is charged with removing individuals who are illegally present in the United States.

In fiscal year 2020, the Agency deported just over 100,000 individuals. That is fiscal year 2020. For context, U.S. Customs and Border Protection logged 458,000 border crossings during that period.

Once President Biden took office and the welcome mat came out and people knew that our borders essentially were open, things have changed dramatically. In fiscal year 2022, the number of deportations fell to just over 38,000—from 100,000 in 2020 to 38,000 in 2022—while the number of border encounters has skyrocketed. Customs and Border Protection logged nearly 2.4 million border crossings that year.

So day after day, the Biden administration is allowing more and more migrants to enter the United States illegally, despite the fact that the vast majority of these individuals have no legal basis to stay, but they are depending on their system being overwhelmed and so are the people who are getting rich, getting paid by the head to smuggle those individuals into the United States.

But at the same time, the administration is doing less and less to actually enforce the law and remove those who have been found to have no credible claim to remain in the United States. The Biden administration simply refuses to enforce America’s immigration laws, and its policies have real and deadly consequences.

It is dangerous for the migrants to make the long trip from their home in the hands of cartels who care nothing for them. They don’t care about people. They just care about the money and the drugs. As a consequence, many migrants are hurt and abused and extorted by the cartels and coyotes en route. Many girls and women are sexually assaulted in astonishingly large numbers.

It is hurtful to law enforcement who are overworked, unappreciated, and burnt out. These policies hurt the border communities like the ones I represent that are expected to shoulder the massive weight of this humanitarian crisis because the Federal Government and the Biden administration refuses to do its job. It hurts small towns, medium-sized towns, and large towns all across America that have been infiltrated by fentanyl and other deadly drugs. And as we saw again this weekend, the administration’s policies victimize people who are attacked by dangerous individuals who never should have been in the United States in the first place.

How much pain and suffering will our country have to endure before the Biden administration takes this seriously? It is past time to secure the border, enforce our immigration laws, and prioritize the safety and security of the American people. Until then, I am sad to say, innocent people will continue to suffer due to the administration’s failed policies.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. HIRONO. 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.

NOMINATION OF JULIE A. SU

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I rise today to express my strong support for Julie Su’s nomination to serve as our next Secretary of Labor.

As we continue working to rebuild and strengthen our economy, it is critical that the Department of Labor is led by someone committed to protecting the rights of all workers, and that person is Julie Su. From combating wage theft to expanding workforce training, Acting Secretary Su has spent her life fighting for workers. For the past 2 years, she has served as Deputy Secretary of Labor alongside Secretary Walsh. Together they helped make life better for workers across the