

world's "holiday from history" was over. When Russia escalated its lawless invasion of Ukraine last year, many observers, including former Secretary of Defense Bob Gates, invoked the same idea.

The West is at a crossroads. Increasingly, fringe voices on the left and right are insisting that it is not America's business to lead. They seem willing to accept American decline and to assume that their lack of interest in history means history won't be interested in them. Meanwhile, many of our allies are waking up to their own commitments to collective defense.

As the world was reminded last February in Ukraine and again on October 7 in Israel, some of our friends and fellow democracies have never had the option of taking a holiday from history. Israel has no choice but vigilant self-defense because murderous theocrats and terrorists have vowed to wipe it off the map. Ukraine has no choice but all-out resistance because an authoritarian thug with delusions of Soviet glory has spent years butchering its people and carving up its sovereign territory. Half a world away, the free people of Taiwan have no choice but to stare down the threat from a communist superpower intent on bringing their island to heel.

It is hard to ignore the growing strategic alignment between these authoritarian forces. They share an interest in one another's violent pursuits and in undermining the West—especially America.

Take the growing strategic partnership between Russia and Iran. The Obama administration foolishly welcomed Putin's intervention in Syria, and it gave Russia influence in the Middle East it hadn't had since the 1970s—mostly at America's expense. Iran and its terror proxies were glad to see Putin prop up Bashar Assad. Under Russian protection, Syria became a training ground and logistics superhighway from Tehran's terror network. And as terrorists challenge America and Israel in the region, Russia is the beneficiary.

It is a symbiotic relationship for the bad guys, and it has only continued to grow. Russia defends Iran at the U.N., and Iran is now providing the same lethal drones its terrorist proxies use to attack American forces in Syria and Iraq directly to Russia for use against Ukraine.

The world's largest state sponsor of terror—with American, Israeli, and Arab blood on its hands—is also sponsoring Russia's war against our friends in Europe.

As one good analysis put it recently, "When Hezbollah terrorists, Hezbollah mercenaries, and Iranian theocrats chant 'Death to America' after murdering Israelis, they're not confused." And it is hardly surprising that Putin has aligned his regime with this terror, given the devastation his forces inflict on civilians in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, China isn't just keeping a close eye on the West's resolve to resist

Russian aggression and Iran-backed terrorism; they are actually getting more directly involved. Just yesterday, for example, a summit of the PRC's so-called Belt and Road Initiative—a massive influence operation aimed at bringing more parts of the world under Beijing's thumb—featured Vladimir Putin as the guest of honor—yet another sign that Russia and China are serious about their "friendship without limits."

Beijing has released a flurry of statements responding to terrorist savagery by condemning Israel's self-defense operations and conspicuously avoiding any mention of Hamas.

The PRC is stepping up its coordination with and support for Iran. It is no surprise that the regime that wants to break the will of the free people of Taiwan is eager to see its fellow travelers in Tehran and Moscow do the same to Israel and Ukraine.

Our adversaries know the challenges they pose to us are linked. The belief that we can abandon allies in one part of the world and not hurt allies elsewhere simply doesn't hold water. In fact, it is naive and dangerous.

The people of Israel have a right to defend themselves, and the United States has an interest in our closest ally in the Middle East rooting out terrorists like Hamas.

Ukraine has a right to sovereignty, and the United States has an interest in Europe—our largest trading partner and strongest ally—not facing an emboldened thug at its gates.

Taiwan and other Asian democracies have a right to self-determination, and the United States has an interest in helping Asian partners stand up to Chinese aggression.

We need to remember America is a superpower. Our interests are global, and with global interests come global responsibilities. Our alliances matter. Our credibility matters. Our friends on the frontlines of authoritarian aggression and terrorist savagery don't have the opportunity to take a holiday from history, and America can't afford to either.

In the coming days, it will be the Senate's responsibility to take strong and decisive action to put maximum support behind Israel's self-defense, equip Ukraine for victory as it defines it, and help Taiwan deter growing threats.

The prosperity America has known for the better part of a century is the direct product of our leadership. Preserving it means standing with our friends and investing in our own strength.

#### TRIBUTE TO BETTY K. KOED, SENATE HISTORIAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now, one final matter, I would like to take a minute to thank an all-star member of the Senate community as she departs on a well-deserved retirement.

For the past 25 years, recording, preserving, and sharing the stories of the

U.S. Senate has been Betty Koed's top responsibility. As Senate Historian, Betty has immersed herself more than pretty much anyone in the lore of this remarkable institution.

Betty joined the Senate as Assistant Historian in 1998, in time to witness history with the impeachment trial of President Clinton. And her intelligence and determination came in handy immediately as the Historian's office phones rang off the hook with questions about the complex rules, procedures, and precedents that surrounded the first such event in more than a century.

But as much as Members of this body are prone to make history, Senators also tend to like consuming history. I myself am no exception. So back in 2009, when former Senate Historian Richard Baker retired, I invited Betty to start visiting the Republican conference lunches to deliver weekly presentations on Senate history.

By all accounts, Betty's "History Minutes" were the highlight of many a lunch. In fact, they were always so popular that we asked her to turn these stories into a book, and I am glad to say that an impressive volume illustrating some of the most dramatic and significant events in the Senate's history was actually published earlier this year.

Over her time in the Senate, Betty has been a fierce advocate for the preservation of Senate records. Her colleagues describe her as a role model and mentor who is highly knowledgeable, considerate, and persistent. It would be no exaggeration to call Betty Koed's tenure as Senate Historian a historic milestone in its own right.

So I would like to thank Betty, with heartfelt thanks for her loyal service to this institution, and I know our colleagues join me in wishing her all the best.

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. Mr. 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. THUNE. Mr. President, yesterday, I came down to the floor to discuss the importance of military preparedness to our national security. The most basic requirement of national security is a strong military, but it is not the only requirement. Maintaining our Nation's strength and our ability to deter threats and discourage our enemies from tangling with us also involves things like a strong economy, energy security, and border security.

And, today, I want to spend a few minutes talking about border security. Border security is an essential part of

keeping our Nation secure. Porous borders are an invitation to criminals, terrorists, and other dangerous individuals. And let us be very clear: There are dangerous individuals out there right now who would like to enter and harm our country. Porous borders are an invitation to those types of individuals.

Since the beginning of the month, four Iranians considered to be “special interest aliens”—individuals, that is, who may pose a threat to the United States—have been apprehended at the southern border in Texas. Now, all told, thousands of special interest aliens—a number of them from Middle Eastern countries—have been apprehended at our southern border in the past 2 years.

During fiscal year 2023, 151 individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist were apprehended attempting to illegally cross our southern border—151. As a recent news story noted, “that figure is more than the total of the previous six . . . years combined.”

That same story also notes:

In the first two weeks of the fiscal year, the CBP sources told Fox News that agents had apprehended more than 30 Iranians, nearly 60 Syrians, 35 Pakistanis, more than 100 Russians, 285 Afghans and nearly 2,000 Chinese migrants at the southern border.

“[M]ore than 30 Iranians, nearly 60 Syrians, 35 Pakistanis, more than 100 Russians, 285 Afghans and nearly 2,000 Chinese migrants at the southern border”—now, it is likely that many of those individuals are simply in search of the promise the United States offers of a better life. But it is also entirely possible that some of these individuals—some of them from intensely hostile countries like Iran—had more malign intentions. And while Customs and Border Protection apprehended the individuals I have mentioned so far, it is not only possible, but likely, that similarly concerning individuals have entered our country undetected.

Since President Biden took office, there have been more than 1.5 million known “got-aways” at the southern borders. Those are individuals that Border Patrol saw but was unable to apprehend. And we can only imagine the number of unknown “got-aways” who have sneaked into the country. Those are people they didn’t see. They have no idea.

How many of those individuals are from hostile countries or are on the Terrorist Watchlist or are members of cartels that target literally every State in the Union and are fueling the fentanyl epidemic? The truth of the matter is we just don’t know, but it is a good bet that, among the “got-aways” were dangerous individuals who should not be entering our country.

Now, I don’t need to tell anyone that the situation at our southern border right now is disastrous. All signs point to fiscal year 2023 being the third record-breaking year of attempted illegal crossings at the southern border under

the Biden administration’s watch. The number of attempted illegal crossings at the southern border last month alone has been estimated to be somewhere in the range of 270,000 people, which would make it the highest monthly number ever recorded.

Customs and Border Protection is overstretched—to put it mildly—and has been for pretty much the entirety of the Biden administration. We could scarcely be sending a more welcoming signal to criminals, terrorists, and other dangerous individuals if we put out a welcome mat. Why wouldn’t dangerous individuals like this take advantage of the chaos at the border to slip into our country undetected?

The Director of the FBI recently warned of copycat attacks in the United States after Hamas’s deadly attack on Israel, and a September threat assessment from the Department of Homeland Security noted:

Terrorist and criminal actors may exploit the elevated flow [of migration] and increasingly complex security environment to enter the United States.

If we want to keep our country secure, we are going to have to get the situation at our southern border under control now. I am glad that President Biden has finally conceded that a border wall is part of the solution, but it must be backed up with the willingness to fully enforce our laws.

In the coming weeks, I expect that we are going to take up a supplemental spending bill to address support for our allies and to provide additional funding that our military may need. I hope—and will work to ensure—that that legislation also includes measures to help secure our southern border.

I have said it before, and I will say it again: If we don’t get national security right, the rest is conversation. And securing our border is an indispensable part of national security.

The terrorist attack on Israel on October 7 should be all the reminder we need of the importance of being constantly on guard against those who would seek to ruin our Nation and to do us harm.

And I hope that, in the wake of this attack, President Biden and congressional Democrats will join Republicans to make both strengthening our military and securing our border a priority. 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.

#### NOMINATION OF MICHAEL G. WHITAKER

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak about the nomination of Michael Whitaker of Vermont to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration.

Yesterday, as you know, his nomination was reported unanimously out of the Senate Commerce Committee in

which we both serve. That was by voice vote, with all the Members of the Commerce Committee overwhelmingly agreeing in a bipartisan fashion that Mr. Whitaker should lead the FAA. This is welcome after 18 months of having no one leading the FAA.

It is not surprising that he had such strong support. Why? Michael Whitaker is immensely qualified, with over 30 years of experience in aviation, both in the public sector and in the private sector. His background and knowledge of the industry is formidable.

First, Michael is a longtime aviator, so he has practical concern about safety in the air and personal experience about flying.

Second, he has real experience running large and complex systems. During his time as the Deputy Administrator at the FAA from 2013 to 2016, Mike helped the FAA upgrade to satellite-enabled surveillance technology. He managed cybersecurity threats and chaired an interagency committee coordinating safety and security enhancements in our airspace. He made flying safer.

Third, he has relevant private sector experience. While in the private sector, Mike has worked on strategy operations for some of the world’s largest travel companies. They include United Airlines, InterGlobe Enterprises, and Trans World Airlines. He will bring those management skills—that capacity to build a team and organize systems in his forward-thinking vision—to the FAA.

Fourth, Mike’s focus is on performance, and his commitment to safety is absolute. That is something that the FAA is primarily responsible for, and it is an awesome responsibility that Mr. Whitaker has taken seriously every day of his life while he has served in both private and public positions in aviation.

Mike is a Vermonter—a small-town person who lives in a small town in Vermont, but he has got big-time experience. He understands the importance of ensuring that everyone is represented, and he knows the realities of what the industry and the FAA needs to succeed.

With Mike in the cockpit of the FAA, our skies will be safer, and he will work tirelessly to ensure that Americans across the country can fly safely and seamlessly wherever they please with as few disruptions as possible. We urgently need a full-time FAA administrator, and Michael Whitaker of Vermont is the ideal candidate for that role.

I urge my colleagues to support his nomination.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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