

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.

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

ISRAEL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, more Jews died on October 7 than have died since the Holocaust. As the war in the Middle East wages on, the world is learning more details about the horrors being unleashed by Hamas, which, as the world now knows, is a U.S.-designated terrorist organization. This has been going on for a long time.

Over the past week and a half, we have heard horrifying stories of atrocities committed against the Israeli people. Last week, I met at Temple Emanu-El, a synagogue in Dallas, TX, and talked to a mom named Kim who has two sons who were born in Dallas. They are native Texans, American citizens, and are now fighting in the IDF, the Israeli Defense Forces.

Another woman had been a teacher of a kibbutz in Israel but had recently relocated to the United States. She recounted watching her phone all of a sudden becoming deluged with messages from that kibbutz about Hamas killers coming in and indiscriminately killing babies, children, and other civilians.

These terrorists have no conscience. They have no moral standards. They not only murdered babies and children, they raped, tortured, and beheaded other innocent civilians. They dismembered the bodies of their victims and captured hostages to use as human shields or human bargaining chips.

It gives me no pleasure to recount the horrific evil that we are seeing played out in real time on our TV screens and in social media. But it is important that we acknowledge the reality of this evil because, if we don't—if we brush it under the rug and we act like, well, there is really some moral equivalency between the Palestinian cause and the Israeli nation and that somehow Hamas is justified in committing these acts—we will have bought the propaganda of Hamas hook, line, and sinker.

Of course, we all know that Hamas is a proxy for the Supreme Leader in Iran and that the IRGC, the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps, and the Quds Force has helped equip and train Hamas and Hezbollah in Lebanon in the northern part of Israel, and that this is part of a long-term effort to extinguish the Jewish State and to eliminate it from the map.

This is not a spontaneous act. I know that written in many of the newspapers the news media has said: Well, Iran didn't know about this.

Well, they may not have known the timing and they may not have known the scale of these attacks, but there is no question they enabled them. And it was their joint cause between Hamas and Iran to commit these atrocities against the people of Israel as part of their desire to extinguish them from the face of the planet.

These terrorists were carrying documents that explicitly outlined the mission's objective: Kill as many individuals as possible and capture hostages. Those were the orders given to the Hamas terrorists. Other documents included detailed plans to target elementary schools—target elementary schools and a youth center in Israel, and specific plans to target the most vulnerable population—women and children.

In an interview on CNN, Israeli President Isaac Herzog provided even more details about the instructions given to these killers. He showed a booklet that was found on the body of a terrorist. It is a pocket-sized pamphlet that provides step-by-step instructions on how to torture and kidnap innocent people.

So the evidence is crystal clear. This is an evil terrorist group whose only goal is to eliminate Israel and the Jewish people and if they can't do that, to kill as many Jews as they possibly can.

In the wake of these attacks, we have seen an overwhelming show of support—certainly here in Congress and across America—for the Israeli people and a powerful condemnation of Hamas.

Here in the Senate, where disagreement seems to be the rule these days, I am glad this is an issue that has garnered overwhelming bipartisan support. In the coming days, I expect the Senate to pass a resolution affirming Israel's right to self-defense—literally its right to exist—and committing American support.

I want to thank Leader SCHUMER, Leader MCCONNELL, Chairman CARDIN, and Ranking Member RISCH for introducing this resolution in the Foreign Relations Committee. I am proud to be one of the 99 Senators who has cosponsored the resolution, and I hope we can advance it formally soon. It is important that the United States is the leader of the free world. It is important that we voice our clear and unwavering support for Israel in the face of this evil. It is important not only what we say, but it is important what we do.

The administration, we know, is preparing a supplemental funding request to give Israel the weapons and the humanitarian relief they need to sustain themselves. I expect this will include weapons, intelligence support, humanitarian aid, and other various and sundry items. Given the constant threats they face from Hamas terrorists and the threat from a potential enlargement of the war if Hezbollah were to join in, it is absolutely critical that we treat this request with urgency. Israel is our closest ally in the Middle East, and it deserves our full support both in words and in action.

While support for Israel has been overwhelming, a small but loud minority has tried to establish some false equivalency between Hamas's attack and Israel's defense. These individuals have offered bogus assessments that somehow Israel is to blame. Sadly, many of these individuals cannot even

offer ignorance as an excuse because they are students and leaders at some of the most prestigious universities in America.

A coalition of students at Harvard issued a statement, claiming that Israel is "entirely responsible for all unfolding violence."

The president of New York University's Student Bar Association falsely claimed that "Israel bears full responsibility for this tremendous loss of life." It is no surprise that this young woman's peers denounced this statement and her future employer rescinded its job offer.

Leaders at Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, Cornell, Stanford, and other elite schools have faced fierce and much-deserved backlash over their responses to this war.

Fortunately, these views do not constitute a majority, and it is important that those who have the evidence to back it up speak out and call it what it is, which is Iranian propaganda.

One prominent voice of reason among college administrators is our own former colleague Ben Sasse, who now serves as the president of the University of Florida. In a letter to Jewish students and alumni, he pointed out the truth, which is what his colleagues in "elite academia" could not bear to say. He called Hamas's actions evil, and he said there is no defense for terrorism.

It is embarrassing that many students, faculty, and administrators at some of America's most prestigious universities cannot even acknowledge that simple fact. It is no wonder people begin to wonder what is being taught in our colleges and universities. Are our children who are attending these colleges and universities being brainwashed? being only told one side of the story? intimidating people who have different points of view and silencing them from speaking out and telling the truth? Unfortunately, I think that is happening on a regular basis at some of these most elite colleges and universities. Our kids are being brainwashed.

While the rhetoric alone is deeply concerning, it is horrifying to see that some of this has turned into actual violence. An Israeli student at Columbia University was assaulted with a stick outside the university's library. Synagogues in Utah were forced to evacuate after receiving bomb threats, which, thankfully, were not credible but were disturbing nonetheless. Swastikas and Nazi flags have been spotted in cities across the country from California to New York.

Let's just state the truth: There is no space, no room, no argument for hate or anti-Semitism in the United States, period.

Now, we do believe in free speech. We do believe that those who have different points of view deserve the right, at some point, to speak their mind. But those of us who know better, who know what the facts are, who have the courage and backbone to stand up and tell