

that night, what they will tell you is, they feared for their safety; they feared for their lives; they don't know if they are any longer welcome on campus or physically safe on campus.

What did the university do in the wake of this attack? Well, the answer has become all too familiar. Virtually nothing. They issued a statement saying that the students weren't authorized to project these genocidal slogans onto the library wall, and that is about it.

We have to do a heck of a lot better than that.

Last night, at Cooper Union, an institution of higher education in the State of New York, Jewish students were barricaded inside their own library as a pro-Hamas group rampaged through the building shouting violent slurs at these students and then pounded on the library doors seeking to gain entrance.

This morning's New York Post reads: "Cooper Union barricades Jewish students inside library as pro-Palestinian protesters bang on [the] doors."

The students who were there last night spoke of being herded into the library, of campus security saying they didn't think they could protect them; campus security then locking the doors to the library to try and keep the Jewish students inside and an angry mob assembling.

There are photos of this. Don't take my word for it. The video is available everywhere. Go look for yourself.

An angry mob of pro-Palestinian, pro-Hamas students were banging on the windows—the glass windows—of the library at the Jewish students who were literally barricaded inside.

These students were calling 9-1-1, calling their relatives, asking for help. Eventually, an hour or more later, campus security reportedly took them out through the back door. They couldn't walk out the front door of a library in their own school. They had to be taken out the back for fear, I guess, of their safety, perhaps also for appearances.

I can't help but think, 50 years ago, 60 years ago, the President of the United States had to activate the 101st Airborne Division to make sure African-American students could go to class in this country without being physically assaulted. Is that what it has come to now on America's college campuses?

Are we going to have to activate the National Guard to see that Jewish students can go to class in safety without being in fear of their lives?

I would just say this: As a nation, we must speak with one voice and say that there is a right, and there is a wrong; there is good, and there is evil; and threatening to kill an entire class of people is wrong and it is evil.

Speaking up, shouting in support of genocide is wrong, and it is evil. Threatening the lives of your fellow students because they are Jewish is wrong, and it is evil.

Plainly, these institutions of so-called higher learning have failed these

students. These students have clearly no idea what right and wrong means. You project stuff like this on a library wall while your Jewish classmates stand in fear for their lives, you don't have any idea about what right and wrong is.

Clearly, these institutions have failed these students, which is why we need to speak with moral clarity now. This is a teachable moment. This is a moment for us to say that genocide is wrong, that terrorist attacks against Jews are wrong, that threats on the lives of Jewish people anywhere—the Middle East, in this country, Europe, anywhere—is wrong.

This shouldn't be hard. But we have to do it so that these students and everywhere within the sound of our voice can understand what right and wrong means—can understand the moral gravity of the situation we are now confronting.

That is why what we are doing today matters, and that is why I am pleased today that we are able now, finally, to pass this resolution that explicitly names the rhetoric, explicitly calls out the language of pro-violence, pro-genocide, and says that is wrong.

Now, I want to be clear. Our First Amendment—of which I am a great defender—our First Amendment allows people to say the most terrible things—vile, horrible, reprehensible things. The First Amendment, as I have often said, is the right to be wrong. And these students are absolutely wrong.

So they may have the right to say these things—although I must add, nobody has the right to threaten violence against other Americans or anybody within their ambit. They may have the right to say terrible things, to say that they are in favor of genocide, to say that they want to see Jewish people killed. They may have the right to say those things, but that doesn't mean that we have to agree with it. That doesn't mean that we have to say: Oh, that is morally neutral. Sure, you can say it, fine. We have no opinion.

No, no, no. The answer to that kind of hateful, virulent, dangerous speech is speech with moral purpose. It is language with moral clarity. It is a moral stand that says: No, that is wrong. That is not us. That is not the United States of America. That is what we are doing right here, right now, on this floor today.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

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

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

MOTION TO DISCHARGE—S.J. RES  
44

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, so much senseless violence, so much death and destruction, shouldn't we at least avoid wars of choice? Shouldn't we at least not go looking for trouble in every corner of the planet?

With the Middle East on fire, what sense does it make to have over 1,000 troops in Niger? Does it make sense to station over 1,000 troops in a country ruled by a military junta? Does it make sense to scour the back roads of Africa droning potential villains?

Today, the Senate will debate and vote on whether U.S. troops should remain engaged in hostilities in Niger. It should not go unnoticed that Congress never voted to send troops to Niger in the first place.

Presidents of both parties have used the September 11, 2001, authorization to use military force to justify wars in dozens of countries from Afghanistan to Libya, to Syria, to Somalia, to Yemen. Niger is but 1 of over 20 countries that the U.S. conducts military operations in, supposedly justified by the 9/11 authorization to use military force.

The impetus for this War Powers Resolution in 2001 has nothing to do with the situation of Africa today. This War Powers Resolution today, though, is related to the July 26 coup in which members of Niger's Presidential Guard, including some officers who were trained in the United States, removed the democratically elected President, Mohammed Bazoum, from power.

Now, the surrounding states around Niger are unhappy with this. The Economic Community of West African States is an organization of 15 countries. They have declared their intention to intervene militarily in Niger if President Bazoum is not restored to power.

We are in the middle of a potential war, with 1,100 troops in Niger, where a democratically elected President has been deposed, and they are being ruled by a military junta and still our troops are there.

In September, two other countries—Mali and Burkina Faso—that have experienced their own armed coups in recent years, signed a mutual defense pact to defend the military junta in Niger.

Niger's new leaders have put its military on maximum alert, citing an increased risk of attack. For its part, the Economic Community of West African States—15 countries—has imposed sanctions, instituted a no-fly zone, and closed border crossings. Recent reports indicate that Nigerian troops have been deployed along the border of the country Benin.

The Sahel is a powder keg, and we have over 1,000 military troops and personnel sitting in the middle of it. The Middle East is on fire, and yet we have 1,100 troops sitting in the middle of a potential war that we could be drug into. American forces face a very real

risk of being caught in the crossfire of a regional African war. That is all we need, is another war.

What are we doing in Niger? As I mentioned earlier, Congress never voted to send troops there. Congress never authorized the use of military force. Yet, on multiple occasions, U.S. forces in Niger have engaged in fire-fights with hostile groups. Sadly, American lives have already been lost.

My colleagues may recall that on October 4, 2017, four U.S. soldiers—SFC Jeremiah Johnson, SSG Bryan Black, SSG Dustin Wright, and SGT La David Johnson—were ambushed and killed while on a mission near the village of Tongo Tongo, Niger. This tragic incident was the largest loss of life for U.S. forces in Africa since the 1993 Black Hawk down incident.

At the time, the New York Times reported in a piece called “An Endless War” that two senior U.S. Senators, a Republican and a Democrat—both of whom still serve in this body—were surprised to learn that the United States even had troops in Niger. This is how distant we have become from controlling our intervention in war—that people in the body, in the upper body of the Congress, don’t even know we have troops in certain countries. We lose soldiers in countries, and nobody even knew we were there. There has been no vote of Congress. There has been no support of the people. This is being done by an administration—the previous administration, the one previous to that, and the current administration.

These Senators were surprised because Congress has abdicated its constitutional war powers to the executive branch. These Senators were surprised because this institute is content to allow the President to sidestep the Constitution and unilaterally deploy U.S. forces anywhere in the world, anytime, for any reason, by citing a virtually limitless interpretation of the 9/11 AUMF.

The country of Niger—the junta, the coup, the discord in Niger—has nothing to do with the attack on 9/11/2001. This attack prompted Congress to authorize war against those who attacked us on 9/11. It was passed in the days following the tragic events. The AUMF was narrowly tailored to bring justice to those responsible for attacking us on 9/11, but an ever-aggrandizing executive deliberately misinterprets—both Republican executives and Democrat executives deliberately misinterpret this AUMF as a limitless document to empower the President to go to war everywhere, all the time, forever.

Administrations of both parties cite this 2001 authorization for use of military force to continue U.S. military operations against various groups in 20 different countries. The majority of these countries—I would say all of these countries—had absolutely nothing to do with 9/11. Many of the groups we are targeting have no connection to 9/11. Many of them didn’t exist in 2001,

and many of their members weren’t even born in 2001. Using an AUMF from 22 years ago—an authorization to get the people who attacked us on 9/11—to justify a war in Niger is a ridiculous notion and should be rejected out of hand.

Deferring the decision as to when, where, and why our country goes to war is a dereliction of duty. Think about it. Our young men and women whom we send into harm’s way who may give up their lives anywhere around the world—don’t they deserve a debate? Don’t they deserve a vote? Don’t the 1,100 troops in Niger deserve that we debate on the floor of the Senate whether they should be there or not? God forbid they are your sons or your daughters, and they lose their lives in a remote corner of Africa, and there has never been one debate on the floor over whether or not we should even be there.

The Middle East is on fire, and we have 1,100 troops in Africa. These military interventions have been carried out across Africa, across the Middle East, and they have cost thousands of lives, trillions of dollars, and have made us less safe and less prosperous. In many cases, our interventions have been counterproductive, destabilizing, and have helped to create the conditions for Islamic extremism to prosper.

Does anybody remember our intervention in Libya? I know many policy-makers in this city think that is ancient history, but that Obama-led offensive helped to destroy the country of Libya. The U.S.-led coalition toppled the government of Muammar Qadhafi, killed hundreds of civilians, fomented anarchy which still exists today throughout the country of Libya, and opened the floodgates for widespread extremist terrorism to spread throughout the region.

If you look objectively, is there more or less terrorism in Libya than before we got rid of Qadhafi, before we intervened and the French and all of the countries intervened? There is more terrorism now. It is more of a problem. Libyans today are unambiguously worse off than before the intervention, than before the war.

In 2010, the U.N. Human Development Index ranked Libya 53rd in the world and 1st in Africa. This year, after the war, after 10 years of chaos, after 10 years of anarchy, Libya ranks near the bottom of all countries. They are 104th in the world. The country is a mess. It is destroyed. It has two governments. It has become a foundation for extremism throughout Africa.

We need to think about our interventions before they occur.

In 2010, the World Bank assessed Libya’s per capita GDP as \$11,600. Ten years later, the per capita GDP is almost half of that—\$5,910.

The U.N. Human Rights Office reports that the execution and torture of civilians in Libya happen on a regular occurrence. The U.N. has also identified the existence of open slave mar-

kets, where migrants and refugees transiting Libya are bought and sold as slaves. Thank goodness the developed world came in to remove the government of Libya and civilize the country that is now a huge mess and a huge sore.

The disasters the Obama administration helped unleash in Libya have had longlasting consequences in the entire region. Libyan arms, including heavy weaponry such as anti-aircraft guns and surface-to-air missiles, have been traced to criminals and terrorists across the region.

So we destroyed any sense of stability in Libya; the chaos spread throughout; and now we say: Oh, now we need to kill all the people who are spreading throughout the region who came from Libya.

We have traced their weapons to terrorists in Niger, in Mali, in Tunisia, in Syria, and in Algeria. Tragically, they are now showing up in Gaza. Some of the weapons in Gaza being launched against Israel are weapons that came out of the war in Libya.

The United States now uses Niger as a drone base to kill and try to clean up the mess that the United States and others created in Libya. The war in Libya that we, the French, and other countries participated in that left a power vacuum, that left a mess, spilled terrorists over into other countries. So what do we do? We create a drone base in Niger to kill these people. What happens when you kill the wrong people? What happens when the drone lands on a wedding, and 22 innocent people die at a wedding? What do you think happens to their relatives? How many terrorists are created for every innocent civilian killed?

You only have to think back to Afghanistan, the mess of leaving Afghanistan. I was for leaving Afghanistan, but it was a terrible military blunder. When we did, the executive branch, to save face—what did they do? They droned somebody. They just droned the wrong person. They droned a humanitarian aid worker and a bunch of kids. What do you think that does for terrorism? When you drone an aid worker and their kids, do you think you get more terrorism? Hell yes, you do. You get 10 more terrorists for every civilian you kill.

There is no reason in the world we should be in the heart of Africa with drones, killing people.

Unfortunately, it is rarely asked if our interminable military interventions create the very terrorists we seek to destroy. It is a question this body needs to answer.

When four of our soldiers were killed in Niger, many believed they were on a mission to track down a person named Doundou Chefou. According to the previous Nigerian Government, Doundou Chefou is a terrorist, but before he took up arms, he was a cattle herder of the Fulani Tribe who had no hatred for the Nigerian Government or the U.S. Government. Members of a rival Tribe,

the Tuareg Tribe, became mercenaries for Qadhafi. Once Libya was destroyed, guess what. They decided to come back to Niger. They were attacking the cattle herder, Chefou.

These are local disputes that have to do with armed mercenaries coming from Libya into Niger. So what do we do? We get involved in that, and tragically American lives were lost getting involved in something when maybe our country never should have been there to begin with.

After Qadhafi was deposed, the mercenaries from Libya returned home to Niger, but they were now armed with weapons of war. They turned these arms on the Fulani Tribe to pillage their cattle. This was a dispute over thieves taking people's cattle. Do you think that necessitates a predator drone to be dropped on these people? Do you think that somehow we are eliminating terrorism by droning people involved in a cattle dispute? Although it may not be justified, should we be surprised that Chefou turned to people who happened to be Islamist for guns and training?

Do the proponents of Western military intervention not understand that we may be creating the terrorists we seek to destroy? Do we not see the folly of our adventurism that transforms cattle herders into jihadists?

U.S. troops have been stationed in Niger since at least 2013. There has been no vote. The Constitution is clear: We do not fight wars without the approval of Congress. Yet, for a decade, we have had troops over there. Both parties, Republican and Democrat, gradually increased and gradually increased. We drone people. We sometimes drone parents. Sometimes we drone people at a wedding. Ten years later, our presence in Niger has multiplied, and not once has this body debated the merits of our mission there, let alone authorized the use of military force.

We will debate it today not because they are interested in the subject, not because they wish to put an imprimatur on war, not because they think they have any responsibility to our soldiers or any responsibility to the people in Africa whether we should be there; we will debate it today because I forced them to debate it. This is a privileged motion, and they can't stop me. This debate over whether or not there should be a war in Africa—a war in Niger—or whether any of our troops should be there is only because I forced them to debate this. They want nothing to do with this. In fact, they would just as soon rely on a resolution from 2001. They want nothing to do with this. They want no responsibility. They want to wash their hands of this. Then one day, when they wake up and discover that four soldiers have died in a country they didn't even know we were involved with, they say: Not my problem. That is a Presidential thing.

That is not what the Constitution intended. The Constitution intended that

we would be involved and that the loss of life and the sending of our troops overseas would be our responsibility and that we would be reticent to do it. Instead, we do nothing; we turn the other way. And when our soldiers die in a heroic fashion, fighting for a cause where the symbolism of the cause is just, there has been no debate. They say: Oh, we voted on that before you were born. You were born long after 2001, but somebody, somewhere, once upon a time, voted for a resolution in 2001, and that is good enough. We wash our hands.

Well, today, we will vote. This will put the Senate on record, and they will be responsible for their vote. Will they vote to end our presence in a country that is now run by a military coup? a country where there is threatened war from all sides? Will we enter into a war that is clearly a war of choice or will we say: No. Maybe it is time to get the heck out of there, to get the heck out of the middle of a war.

Either way, I will put them on record today—but not because they want to but because they are forced to debate this issue because I bring it to the floor.

We have learned that the soldiers who perished tragically in 2017 in Niger were on a mission authorized by section 127e of title 10 of the United States Code. What is that? It is a piece of the law that unfortunately has been put forward by the legislature to give the President the power to do whatever he wants up to \$100 million, the authority to expend up to \$100 million during a fiscal year to “provide support to foreign forces, irregular forces, groups, or individuals engaged in supporting or facilitating authorized ongoing military operations.”

Those are a lot of fancy words to say the President can do anything he wants anywhere in the world because we gave him this power. But there is something in the Constitution that says we cannot delegate our power. The Constitution doesn't allow the legislature to delegate their power to the Executive.

We can't give up our warmaking power. This is unconstitutional. You cannot allow just little wars to happen, up to \$100 million per year, without any vote. That is giving up the authority the Constitution gave to us. It is clearly unconstitutional and should be repealed.

In short, this section of legal code provides the Pentagon unilateral authority to wage secret wars anywhere in the world without any oversight by Congress and even less public scrutiny. Unfortunately, the loss of four of our soldiers illuminates the fact that our troops who are operating under this authority are also in harm's way.

Earlier this month, the Biden administration finally formally declared that a military coup took place in Niger. Once that declaration was made, the United States was statutorily required to suspend all foreign and military as-

sistance. You would think that would include having 1,000 troops there.

A senior administration official stated to CNN that the counterterrorism operations will remain paused, as will all U.S. training activities to build the capacity of the Nigerian forces.

It seems as if our troops have no mission. Someone should explain why we are still leaving them in the middle of a war. French President Emmanuel Macron recently announced that France will end its military presence in Niger and bring some 1,500 soldiers home. We should also bring our 1,000 troops home.

To commit America's military to fight wars on behalf of the Nation is the most consequential and humbling responsibility that Congress is entrusted with. Can we not, at the very least, muster the courage to have a debate? If America's interest in Niger is of such vital importance that we ask our young men to fight and potentially pay the ultimate sacrifice to defend it, we at least owe our soldiers a debate in Congress—not, “Your grandparents debated this,” “Your parents debated this,” or, “Another generation debated this,” but that we are willing to debate, here and now, whether or not we should be at war in Niger.

A “yes” vote on my resolution gives each of us an opportunity to go on record and tell our constituents that we will no longer stand idly by as the President sends their sons and daughters into harm's way to fight wars, with no clear objective, with no definition of victory, with no exit strategy, and with no constitutional authorization.

I encourage my colleagues to vote yes to take America out of hostilities in Niger.

#### MOTION TO DISCHARGE

Mr. President, I move to discharge S.J. Res. 44.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The clerk will report the motion to discharge.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to discharge from the Committee on Foreign Relations, S.J. Res. 44, directing the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities in the Republic of Niger that have not been authorized by Congress.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to my friend's motion to discharge this from our committee.

Let me start where he left off. He is asking that we remove our troops from hostilities in Niger. Let me say this as clearly as I can: We have no troops involved in hostilities in Niger. If we did, this would be a big deal and this place would be full and we would be talking about combat operations. We do not have that.

The United States is not involved in combat operations in Niger. We do conduct focused intelligence operations to protect our troops in the region as well as our partners and allies and, most importantly, to monitor threats.

It is inaccurate to equate routine security assistance in counterterrorism operations and monitoring with involvement in hostilities. This incorrect assumption threatens U.S. security assistance around the globe.

A swift U.S. withdrawal from Niger, as proposed in this resolution, would weaken our regional reconnaissance efforts to monitor terrorist activities, which, of course, are in the national security interests of the United States of America and all American citizens. It would also leave the door open for Russia to come in and take over our facilities.

In early 2023, AFRICOM Commander Gen. Michael Langley told Congress that “Africa is the epicenter of international terrorism,” an understatement, at best, and something we all knew. Since then, the threat has nothing but grown against U.S. interests and partners in the Sahel. As it has grown, Iran and the Wagner Group, backed by the Kremlin, seek to exploit Sahel’s weakness by aligning with military juntas.

Despite the recent coup in Niger weakening the country’s security, invoking U.S. restrictions on aid, Niger remains vital for Western counterterrorism in the Sahel and for observation purposes.

America cannot be the policemen of the world, but that does not mean we should not have observation posts, we should not do counterintelligence and national security monitoring, and it doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t do intelligence operations.

With all due respect to my friend, I know that this is well-intentioned, but the result would be very negative for U.S. national security.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I, too, also oppose this motion for the reasons that Senator RISCH outlined.

Our presence there are not troops in hostility. To the contrary. We have been asked. Our African partners have asked for our support, and our European allies are looking for us to stand firm.

This is a situation where our troops are welcomed in order to prevent the terrorist activities that are taking place in that part of Africa.

We had a committee hearing on the Sahel this week. You saw the circumstances in this part of Africa. It is dangerous there. The U.S. presence is helping save lives and to contain terrorism. Our partners in Africa want us there to deal with that threat. Now is not the time to signal that we are abandoning them. This is not the time to draw down our military presence in Niger, which could directly impact their security.

Now is not the time for the United States to send a message that we cannot be relied upon. Think about what this says to our partners if we were to pull out. Think about what it says to

our enemies. Russia already has a foothold in Africa, including right next door in Mali. Their presence has been absolutely devastating for the people of the countries where it operates.

Russia’s affiliated forces have committed horrific human rights atrocities. Just in Mali, the Wagner mercenaries and multiple armed forces are believed to have massacred 500 people in March of 2022. That is why our presence is so valuable and so important to that region. We do not give enough attention to that part of the world. We certainly don’t want to signal that we are abandoning that part of the world. If we do that, we leave a vacuum. If we leave a vacuum, Russia will fill it; the Wagner mercenaries will fill it.

I urge my colleagues to defeat the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, the opponents of the resolution have stated here today on the floor that no troops are involved in combat in Niger. I think the families of the four soldiers who died over there would be surprised to find out that their loved ones who gave their lives were not involved in combat. What an insult.

They would also be surprised—or people would be surprised—to find out that killing someone with a drone is not combat. One of the main bases we have in Niger is a drone base for killing people. So if it is not combat to kill people with a drone and it is not combat to have four soldiers die, I am not sure what combat is. But this is clearly combat. It is clearly wrong. It clearly has not been authorized. It should not be authorized.

The argument has also been made by opponents of this resolution that they want us there; that all of Africa is in open arms and wants us there. Well, guess what, the people who rule the country of Niger don’t. They asked the French to leave, and the French are leaving. All 1,500 troops are leaving. They have asked us to leave. Maybe we should take their advice.

It is not a democratically elected government. So the military junta that took over and put the President in jail wants us to leave. The people who want us to stay are in other countries who have threatened war with Niger for imprisoning the President. There is a conflict. There have been 17 military coups in this part of the world. This part of Africa, in the last decade, has had 17 coups and, guess what, 11 of the coups are led by people trained in the United States.

This is a policy that is not working. We think it is a benign policy. It is a terrible policy. We are bringing them here, training them; they are going over and deposing the democratically elected President. Don’t be fooled. There is combat there. Four of our soldiers have died, and it is an insult to their families to say it is not combat.

They don’t want us; the juntas asked us to leave; and I would support this

resolution, which says we need to bring our troops home.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I just want to correct the record. It is correct that they asked the French to leave, but they want America’s presence there. They have not asked America and its troops to leave. That is why it is not hostilities. We are there at their invitation, not as a hostile force.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, very briefly to respond to my good friend from Kentucky, first of all, we are not conducting drone strikes out of Niger. We have not. We are not. We will not.

As far as the four troops who were killed in 2017, the good Senator knows that was well investigated; it was not during combat operations that they were killed that U.S. troops were involved in. It was a one-off that certainly was accidental. We are not engaged in hostilities or combat in Niger.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, opponents of this resolution say we are not involved in combat and that drones aren’t killing people. Guess what. All those records are secretive. They are all classified and put away from the American people. We have no idea what they are doing with drones. I tend to doubt it, and I do think drones have killed people.

I also think that we are using our ability to surveil and oversee the region to give them targets for their own drones. So, no, we are involved.

When they say that the people of Niger want us to stay, are they talking about the President who is in jail? The guy who was elected is in jail. Are they now saying it is justified to stay because a bunch of thugs who took over the government by military force want us to stay? What a crazy notion.

You are here on the floor today supporting the junta. You will support whatever it takes to stay there. You don’t care whether it is a democratically elected government or a junta, but it is a mess. The surrounding countries support the President, who is in jail—some of them. Two or three of them who have had juntas themselves support the junta. It is a mess. The French are leaving because it is a mess.

There is no clear mission. Our mission was to train their troops. Are you going to train the junta’s troops?

They have been declared a coup. Even the Biden administration has declared them a coup, and we are cutting off funding, but we are going to leave troops in the middle of a war. If they are killed by a terrorist attack, if hundreds of our soldiers are killed as they were in Beirut, I think people will rue the day you put our soldiers in the middle of a thankless situation, with no mission, no plan, and no approval by Congress.

I recommend a “yes” vote on the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 4366

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I would ask unanimous consent that there be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to each rollcall vote during the consideration of H.R. 4366.

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I would ask consent that the vote scheduled for 11:30 begin immediately.

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

VOTE ON MOTION TO DISCHARGE

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I would ask unanimous consent that we proceed to the roll call vote, and I ask for the yeas and nays on this resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to discharge.

Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) and the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

The result was announced—yeas 11, nays 86, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 270 Leg.]

YEAS—11

Braun	Markey	Sanders
Kaine	Marshall	Vance
Kennedy	Merkley	Welch
Lee	Paul	

NAYS—86

Baldwin	Fetterman	Reed
Barrasso	Fischer	Ricketts
Bennet	Gillibrand	Risch
Blackburn	Graham	Romney
Blumenthal	Grassley	Rosen
Booker	Hagerty	Rounds
Boozman	Hassan	Rubio
Britt	Hawley	Schatz
Brown	Heinrich	Schmitt
Budd	Hickenlooper	Schumer
Butler	Hirono	Scott (FL)
Cantwell	Hoeven	Shaheen
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Sinema
Cardin	Johnson	Smith
Carper	Kelly	Stabenow
Casey	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Cassidy	Lankford	Tester
Collins	Luján	Thune
Coons	Lummis	Tillis
Cornyn	Manchin	Tuberville
Cortez Masto	McConnell	Van Hollen
Cotton	Menendez	Warner
Cramer	Moran	Warnock
Crapo	Mullin	Warren
Cruz	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Daines	Murphy	Wicker
Duckworth	Murray	Wyden
Durbin	Ossoff	Young
Ernst	Peters	

NOT VOTING—3

King	Padilla	Scott (SC)
------	---------	------------

The motion was rejected.

**MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2024—Continued**

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). The Senator from Indiana.

AMENDMENT NO. 1182

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, I call up my amendment No. 1182 and ask that it be reported by number.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Indiana [Mr. BRAUN], for himself and others, proposes an amendment numbered 1182 to amendment No. 1092.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prohibit earmarks)

On page 2, after line 19, add the following:  
**SEC. 4. PROHIBITION ON EARMARKS.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any provision of any division of this Act, none of the funds made available under any division of this Act may be used to implement any earmark, Community Project Funding, or Congressionally Directed Spending specified in any provision of any division of this Act or in any report described in section 3.

(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall prevent funds allocated for any earmark, Community Project Funding, or Congressionally Directed Spending included in any division of this Act or in a report described in section 3 of the matter preceding division A in this Act from being awarded under a merit-based process under existing law.

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, Americans are hurting more than I think in any other time since I have been here for sure: high inflation—I calculate in the 5 years I have been here, we have added 15 trillion to our national debt—struggling to make ends meet and I think inflation, and all of this is DC's fault.

Starting in 2021, Congress kept passing huge spending bills. We have never gone off of it since then. We now borrow a trillion dollars every 6 months; it used to be annually. Massive spending packages sail through this place because they are packed with pet projects. We have even brought back earmarks. Earmarks give Representatives, give Senators, the incentive to be big spenders. We should cut every earmark out of this bill and ban them permanently and quit loading up our kids and grandkids with the debt to pay for all this.

Shameful, in my mind.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

MAINE SHOOTING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, before I speak, I just want to take a moment to speak to the gut-wrenching shooting that occurred in Maine last night. The situation, I know, is still developing, and I am sure there will be more to say about what the Lewiston community is going through and what steps we, as a nation, must take to prevent gun violence.

But even as we get more information, it is painfully clear this was a horrific blow to a close-knit community, and I want my colleagues from Maine and everyone in Maine to know that my heart goes out to them, everyone who is affected by this tragedy, and I think I speak for all of us when I say the Senate stands with both of our colleagues from Maine.

AMENDMENT NO. 1182

Mr. President, now to the task at hand. Last Congress, Senate and House Committees on Appropriations leaders reinstated the practice of congressionally directed spending—or CDS—with bipartisan support. CDS is an important way for Senators to advocate for their States and the communities they know best through their investments in projects to improve transportation and drinking water infrastructure, support workforce development programs, childcare centers, so much more.

So at the beginning of this year, the Senator from Maine and I laid out a robust process to accept CDS requests for fiscal year 2024, and that process included extremely important guardrails: requiring each Senator who requested a CDS to certify neither they nor their immediate family members have any financial interest in the project, to ensure that each funded project is clearly identified in the reports with the requesting Senator's name and posted on our committee website, required Senators to publish their CDS requests on their own websites, established an audit process with the GAO, prohibited for-profit entities from receiving CDS funding, and established a total limit on the amount of funding that could be dedicated to CDS in our Senate bills.

Across the three bills in this funding package, the committee received nearly 7,000 CDS requests from 66 Senators on both sides of the aisle. Then our staff worked diligently to review all of those requests to make sure they met Agency eligibility requirements and complied with Senate rules and the additional guidelines we had set—if the project met those requirements, eligible for funding.

We respect the projects that Senators choose to request and their decisions on CDS priorities for their States and their constituents. And through the CDS process, Congress is exercising our constitutional power of the purse. After all, we all know better than anyone about the needs of our States and our constituents.

So I oppose this amendment, and I urge my colleagues to do so as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

MAINE SHOOTING

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, before I address the amendment offered by Senator BRAUN, let me thank the Senator from Washington State for her very kind comments expressing condolences to the people of Maine.

Our hearts are so heavy today. This heinous attack, which has robbed the lives of at least 18 Mainers and injured so many more, is the worst mass shooting that we could ever imagine in our State. This is a dark day for our State.

I am grateful for the expressions of support and offers of help and condolences that I have received from my colleagues and friends across the Nation as well as from the administration.

I have had conversations both last night throughout the night and early