

Nuclear triad modernization: A year-long CR would delay nuclear triad modernization, including a delay in the procurement of the B-21 Raider and could prevent the award of the second Columbia class ballistic missile submarine.

Shipbuilding and ship maintenance: Under a year-long CR, 30 percent (\$9.7B) of the funding in the Navy shipbuilding budget request could not be spent and only one of two requested Virginia class submarines could be awarded. Additionally, a year-long CR would cancel or delay ship depot maintenance availabilities, impacting readiness.

Munitions production and replenishment: Under a year-long CR, DoD could not award multi-year procurement contracts to increase production capacity or replenish inventories for munitions critical to INDOPACOM, including long range anti-ship missiles, GMLRs (precision rockets), Patriot air defense missiles, the naval strike missile, and a long-range version of the joint air to surface standoff missile.

Pacific Defense Initiatives: A year-long CR would jeopardize \$1.3 billion in investments critical to DoD's INDO-PACIFIC posture including impacts to forward basing, sensor-to-shooter capabilities, long range radars, hypersonic defense, and investments in classified capabilities.

No new military construction projects: Military construction projects are, by definition, new starts, so a year-long CR could cause a year-long delay in construction projects intended to modernize our installations and improve quality of life.

Passing a full-year funding bill and the President's national security supplemental request would prevent these devastating impacts. It would also provide funding for critical weapons and equipment for our allies and partners while replenishing depleted DoD stocks and providing for robust investments in the defense industrial base.

We owe our servicemembers the tools they need to be successful. We have asked them to modernize and accelerate the future capabilities they need to continue to deter and project credible combat power. We need full appropriations to stay ahead of pacing, acute, and unforeseen challenges.

I appreciate your continued support for our Joint Force and look forward to our future engagements.

Sincerely,

CHARLES Q. BROWN, JR.,
General, U.S. Air Force.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 379, Micah W.J. Smith, of Hawaii, to be United States District Judge for the District of Hawaii.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Alex Padilla, Jack Reed, Patty Murray, Christopher A. Coons, Sheldon Whitehouse, Mazie Hirono, Peter Welch, Richard Blumenthal, Jeanne Shaheen, Margaret Wood Hassan, Chris Van Hollen, Brian Schatz, John W. Hickenlooper, Robert P. Casey, Jr.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination

of Micah W.J. Smith, of Hawaii, to be United States District Judge for the District of Hawaii, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. HICKENLOOPER) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 57, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 319 Ex.]

YEAS—57

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Hirono	Rosen
Blumenthal	Kaine	Rounds
Booker	Kelly	Sanders
Brown	Kennedy	Schatz
Butler	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Lujan	Sinema
Carper	Manchin	Smith
Casey	Markey	Stabenow
Collins	Menendez	Tester
Coons	Merkley	Tillis
Cortez Masto	Mullin	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Fetterman	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Welch
Graham	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden

NAYS—42

Barrasso	Ernst	Paul
Blackburn	Fischer	Ricketts
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Braun	Hagerty	Romney
Britt	Hawley	Rubio
Budd	Hoeven	Schmitt
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Cramer	Lummis	Tuberville
Crapo	Marshall	Vance
Cruz	McConnell	Wicker
Daines	Moran	Young

NOT VOTING—1

Hickenlooper

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KELLY). On this vote, the yeas are 57, the nays are 42.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Iowa.

IRAN

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, if the Biden administration decides to allow a terrorist state access to billions of dollars, then, at a bare minimum, the Biden administration must perform exceedingly strict oversight of how that money is used.

It is pretty simple, common sense requires considering the attendant risk that this money gives to Iran. The Biden administration has created a serious problem that needs strict oversight.

More than all that, the Congress must also have the same regard of how the executive branch conducts its business in regard to these billions of dollars.

Today, I have an on-point example to present to my colleagues. In September of this year, the administration's State Department provided Iran access to \$6 billion as part of a prisoner swap agreement. Then, in mid-October, the United States and the Qatari Governments decided to refreeze these funds due to the

October 7 Hamas terrorist attack on Israel.

Hamas, an Iranian-funded terrorist organization, as we all know, attacked Israel and murdered civilians, seized hostages, and destroyed towns. Hamas committed unspeakable acts of terror and evil, not seen since the Nazis, toward Jewish people.

On October 12 of this year, Secretary of State Blinken addressed the international media and, in that address, claimed that the State Department has "strict oversight of the funds and retains the right to freeze them"—meaning freezing the \$6 billion.

Now, there had better be strict oversight—the taxpayers ought to require that—exceedingly strict oversight. I now ask: What did the Secretary of State mean when he said "strict oversight"?

I don't want lip service from the Secretary. I want details. So on October 12 of this year, I wrote a letter asking exactly that: What are the details?

My letter also sought to know what government Agencies are involved in this alleged oversight. What are the roles of the respective Agencies in this oversight? What enforcement mechanisms are in place to ensure compliance? How will the State Department be able to punish Iran if conditions of the \$6 billion is violated?

I also asked what components of the State Department are responsible for conducting this oversight, among other questions.

Almost a month past the 2-week deadline to respond, the State Department did finally send me a letter. That letter was very incomplete and a very insufficient response that failed to answer the essential question, using his words: What does "strict oversight" mean? The letter didn't deal with that, and it seems to be a pretty simple question.

The State Department letter meekly said: "The United States will have full visibility and will exercise strict oversight as to how and when the funds are used."

This isn't an answer; this is lip service. We are talking about billions of dollars accessible by a terrorist regime.

So as you would expect Senator GRASSLEY to do, on November 21, I sent a letter, a followup letter, to Secretary Blinken, informing him of his failed response and then again renewing my request for Congress and the American people to know and understand what the Secretary meant by the words he used of "strict oversight."

(Ms. CORTEZ MASTO assumed the Chair.)

The Secretary made these oversight promises publicly in an international setting, and the Secretary has an obligation to explain himself what "strict oversight" is. If the State Department is engaging in strict oversight, then say what it is and give us, the Congress, the response, the details of that. The taxpayers deserve to know exactly

how the Biden administration plans to ensure proper oversight of \$6 billion to Iran.

This Senator, obviously, won't stop demanding answers, especially when it comes to a terrorist regime's access to billions of dollars that the United States has something to say about.

BUDGET

Madam President, then, on another subject, Iowa is home to roughly 28 different types of snakes. Some are venomous—copperheads and rattlesnakes. However, the one snake doing the most damage to Iowans is the snake that is not even in Iowa. So I would like to introduce you to the brown tree snake. The brown tree snake doesn't reside in Iowa, Washington, DC, or any other State represented within the Senate. That snake lives in Guam. That snake is not only damaging the native animals of Guam, it is wreaking havoc on the American taxpayers.

So this gets to money. The Federal Government's goal, from what I have been told, is to eradicate the snakes, and that is where millions of dollars comes in. Now, our government has been trying to do this for the last 30 years.

On June 7, 2023, I sent a letter to the Department of Defense, the Department of the Interior, and the Department of Agriculture. I asked those three Agencies how they have spent taxpayers' money to eradicate this snake from Guam. After waiting 5 months and an additional request on August 3, I received responses from these Agencies. Alarming, none of the three were able to tell me how many of the snakes are thought to be on the island or the estimated timeline for the eradication. It seems to me, our government ought to have better statistics that tell us what their planning is and how their goals are being met, but you can see soon that they don't have that information.

So let me say, it is obvious, with all the taxpayers' money they are getting, they ought to at least have some sort of an estimate on this subject.

So what did my oversight find? We will start with the Department of Agriculture. That Department, from fiscal year 2000 until right now, its budget expenditures were over \$10 million. Now, that is a drop in the bucket compared to others.

This is what I learned from the Department of the Interior. That Department told me that from fiscal year 1993 to now, they have funded over \$90 million to support eradication, suppression, and interdiction of the brown tree snake.

Now, another Department, the Department of Defense, gave me this figure for the same fiscal years. It spent more than \$140 million.

How many more decades and hundreds of millions of dollars do we have to spend on this snake, and what kind of projects have the taxpayers funded related to this snake? I have got some examples for you. Four projects in fis-

cal years 2009, 2010, 2014, and 2018 related to the application of Tylenol-treated baits, which are poisonous to the snakes, \$2.9 million; \$600,875 for multiple public awareness campaigns to educate the public in Guam on how the snake affects the ecosystem and human health and other factors; \$376,659 for various research projects, including improved camera monitoring of the snake; caged bird colonies as superattractors with integrated snake trapping; and studying the efficacy of self-resetting kill traps; \$122,462 for purifying and testing gecko skin compounds; \$56 million in fiscal year 2023 for the brown tree snake barrier south multispecies barrier.

Now, that last one ought to really hit home for you. The Biden administration can't secure the southern border. Millions of immigrants are illegally crossing every year. According to reports in fiscal year 2023, 172 people on the FBI's Terrorist Watchlist have been encountered at the border. How many on the Terrorist Watchlist who haven't been encountered that are "got-aways"? I guess we don't have a figure on that one. So the 172 are the ones that we know of.

Here, Congress and the Biden administration have no problem spending \$56 million on a barrier to secure land against a snake. This is a clear example of spending that is out of control and why Congress must perform more exacting oversight.

Sadly, this is not a new problem. On July 22, 2004, the late Senator from Arizona, John McCain, made the following remarks on this floor regarding earmarks identified in a defense appropriations bill for that year, 2004:

\$1 million for the Brown Tree Snakes. Once again, the brown tree snake has slithered its way into our defense appropriation bill. I'm sure the snakes are a serious problem, but a defense appropriations act isn't the appropriate vehicle to address this issue.

So here I stand, 20 years later, identifying that this snake has continued to wreak havoc on both the island of Guam and, of course, on the American taxpayers.

I recognize that the brown tree snake is a serious problem in Guam, but it has also become a serious problem robbing the American taxpayers, taking millions out of their billfolds without really any plan that I have been able to discover that the government knows how they are going to spend the taxpayers' money to eradicate this brown tree snake.

Congressional appropriations of taxpayer money will be subject to waste, fraud, and abuse without congressional oversight. Accordingly, that is exactly what is needed here to better determine if taxpayer money has been used as it should have and whether these spending levels are needed entirely or at all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. RICKETTS. Madam President, we have a humanitarian and national

security crisis at our southern border. Just last month, Customs and Border Protection encountered 241,000 contacts, people coming across that southern border. That is three times the amount that we had in October of 2020.

Since Joe Biden has been President, there have been 6.6 million border contacts and 1.8 million "got-aways." And the "got-aways"—those are the folks whom Customs and Border Protection, CBP, saw but couldn't encounter, couldn't get to. That is more than President Obama and President Trump's administration combined.

Children are being trafficked; people are dying; and the cartels are profiting. And my colleague from Iowa just referenced the southern border. In total, we have seen 172 people on the Terrorist Watchlist try to enter our country in the last year—169 at the southern border. And to put that in perspective, that number used to be in the single digits every year. Last month, it was 12. We are encountering more people on the FBI's Terrorist Watchlist in 1 month than we used to get in an entire year.

Border security is national security. Certainly, the events in Israel should bring home to us the danger of a border that is not properly protected. And it is President Biden's policies that have led to this humanitarian and security crisis.

Now, I have been down to the southern border four times, just recently as well, and I have talked to the folks at CBP, and, yes, they need some resources. Things like the aerostat blimps have been hugely successful in being able to counter the cartel's drones to monitor people trying to come across the border. So there are resources that we can provide to our southern border to help strengthen. But you know what the No. 1 thing they told me they needed? It was a change in policy because it is the policy that is driving all these people to take this dangerous journey to illegally cross into our country.

Well, now the Senate is going to take up border security, and President Biden's solution is to ask for more money to help process all the people coming across the border. That is not going to fly. If you are just processing them more efficiently coming across the border, you are not deterring anybody from coming across our border. It is the policies that are sending a message to people to come here illegally. The policy needs to change. So as we consider a bill—perhaps a supplemental bill where we are going to have border security in it—it must contain policy changes. The policy is what caused this. We have to change the policy.

But what are some of those policies? We see that we have an asylum system and a parole system that are broken. We need to address that, and then we must have a first safe country policy. You may say, what is a first safe country? Well, if you are seeking asylum and you are fleeing your home country,