

and Iraq more than 160 times. They attack us because we are in close proximity to them; and they couldn't attack us, frankly, if we weren't there.

These attacks have accelerated following Hamas' monstrous October 7 attack on Israel. Since October 17, U.S. troops have been attacked at least 76 times—40 times in Syria and 36 times in Iraq.

According to the Pentagon, a total of 60 U.S. military were injured in these attacks. Of those, at least 32 were at the al-Tanf garrison in southeastern Syria, where our soldiers suffered various injuries including traumatic brain injuries.

The U.S. responded with a series of strikes on facilities used by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and its proxies in Syria and Iraq.

During his time in office, President Biden has carried out strikes on Iranian proxies on at least eight separate occasions. Each time, the White House claimed that the strikes were necessary to deter further attacks.

How many times do our troops need to be attacked for the administration to realize that we are not deterring anyone?

Does anybody believe the ninth air strike will make a difference or do the trick?

We are actually a target. We are a trip wire. We are a place they can actually reach by being there with no clear-cut mission.

In 2019, Joe Biden, as Presidential candidate, promised to end the forever wars in the Middle East, saying:

Staying entrenched in unwinnable conflicts only drains our capacity to lead on other issues that require our attention.

I wish he still had the same belief.

But 900 troops sitting in the middle of the Syrian desert does not advance U.S. interests or provide deterrence. In fact, their presence does the exact opposite. Their presence invites the Iranian proxies to be able to reach them with attacks. This is the only way these groups can strike at the United States. It is the only way they can get attention. If they kill each other, no one seems to pay attention; if they kill Americans, they pay attention. So why would we plop Americans down in the desert within a few dozen miles of these folks and allow them to be attacked? We actively are providing Iran leverage to direct proxies to attack U.S. forces. This is the sort of strategic genius—so-called genius that the Washington establishment parades around as prudent foreign policy.

Our troops' presence also risks getting us dragged into a wider regional war. Imagine if these recent attacks resulted in the deaths of 60 of our servicemembers—not injuries but deaths. How would the Biden administration react to that? History is replete with major wars breaking out for less.

President Biden would do well to channel the wisdom of President Ronald Reagan.

In 1984, Ronald Reagan withdrew U.S. troops from Lebanon following the Beirut Marine Corps barracks bombing that killed 241 U.S. military personnel.

Remarking on the decision in his autobiography, Reagan wrote:

In the weeks [immediately] after the bombing, I believed the last thing that we should do was to turn tail and leave. Yet the irrationality of the Middle East politics forced us to rethink our policy there. If there would be some rethinking of policy before our men die, we would be a lot better off. If that policy had changed towards more of neutral position and neutrality, those 241 marines would still be alive today.

President Reagan made the right decision in 1984, and we now have the chance to make the right decision in 2023, without any more American servicemembers being injured or killed.

The American people have had enough of endless wars in the Middle East. The American people have had enough of the uniparty—the “demopublican” party directing their sons and daughters to fight and risk their lives in these internecine conflicts when the United States is not directly threatened and no vital U.S. interest is at stake.

My War Powers Resolution that I put forward today offers the American people an opportunity to see how clearly their elected Senators view our unconstitutional, unnecessary, and dangerous presence in Syria.

This vote makes it impossible for Senators to avoid voting or stating their opinion on having troops in Syria. Today's vote essentially puts every Senator on record as being either for or against having U.S. troops in Syria.

I urge all my colleagues to muster the courage to reclaim their constitutional responsibilities by voting to remove U.S. troops in Syria. Let's finally bring our troops home.

With that, I move to discharge S.J. Res. 51 from the Committee on Foreign Relations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is pending.

The majority leader.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 410.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Harry Coker, Jr., of Kansas, to be National Cyber Director.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

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. 410, Harry

Coker, Jr., of Kansas, to be National Cyber Director.

Charles E. Schumer, Gary C. Peters, Ben Ray Lujan, Tammy Duckworth, Margaret Wood Hassan, Jack Reed, Angus S. King, Jr., Michael F. Bennet, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tim Kaine, Chris Van Hollen, Mazie Hirono, Richard Blumenthal, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard J. Durbin, Jeanne Shaheen, Sheldon Whitehouse, Mark Kelly.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion filed today, December 7, be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

SYRIA

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to this resolution. First, this resolution obscures the facts and alleges that American troops are involved in hostilities in Syria.

American troops have remained in Syria across multiple administrations to ensure the lasting defeat of the Islamic State. Our presence is authorized under the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force, the legal cornerstone of our counterterrorism operations around the world. The Islamic State remains a threat to Americans and our partners. According to the State Department's latest reports on terrorism, the Islamic State “remains resilient and determined to attack.”

Senator PAUL no doubt recalls the Islamic State's attacks across the region—the depraved videos of slaves, beheadings, the Yazidi genocide, and the attacks against civilians in France and into the heart of Europe. As recently as last year, we saw the Islamic State conduct a prison break in northern Syria and witnessed an uptick in attacks. Despite the fact that we shattered their caliphate, the group is down, but not out. Our troop presence is a critical element to maintaining pressure on the Islamic State and keeping Americans safe.

Senator PAUL's resolution points to the numerous Iranian-sponsored attacks against our troops in Iraq and Syria. I share these concerns and urge the administration to do more to establish deterrence against Iran.

The House went through this exercise as recently as March and voted down a similar effort to pull our troops by a wide margin.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this resolution.

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

VOTE ON MOTION TO DISCHARGE

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays on S.J. Res. 51.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The result was announced—yeas 13, nays 84, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 333 Leg.]

YEAS—13

Braun	Murphy	Warren
Durbin	Paul	Welch
Lee	Sanders	Wyden
Markley	Tuberville	
Merkley	Vance	

NAYS—84

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

NOT VOTING—3

Cramer	Moran	Rounds
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The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). The motion is not adopted.

The motion was rejected.

The Senator from Rhode Island.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024—CONFERENCE REPORT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise to express my support for the fiscal year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act. I am glad that we have just brought the NDAA conference report to the floor.

First, I would like to acknowledge Senator ROGER WICKER, Chairman MIKE ROGERS, and Representative ADAM SMITH, whose partnership has been critical for the success of this bill.

The hallmark of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees has long been bipartisanship, and I am glad we have continued that tradition for the 63rd consecutive year.

I would also like to thank my colleagues on the Senate and House

Armed Services Committees who helped produce this bill, as well as Leader SCHUMER, Leader MCCONNELL, Speaker JOHNSON, and Leader JEFFRIES, who facilitated a thorough debate and enabled all Members to engage in the process. We were able to negotiate hundreds of provisions between both Chambers over the past few months—the most in many years.

This is a strong, forward-looking bill that I think we can all be proud of. This NDAA is laser-focused on the threats we face. It addresses a broad range of pressing issues, from strategic competition with China and Russia to countering threats from Iran, North Korea, violent extremists, and climate change. The bill authorizes record level investments in key technologies, like hypersonics and artificial intelligence, and makes real progress toward modernizing our ships, aircraft, and combat vehicles.

Most importantly, this NDAA provides a historic level of support for our troops and their families, including the largest pay raise in decades.

I am confident it will provide the Department of Defense and our military men and women with the resources they need to meet and overcome the national security threats we face.

I would like to take this opportunity, also, to recognize the incredible staff who have made this bill possible. Senator WICKER will, I am sure, speak on behalf of the minority staff in just a moment, but I wanted to specifically recognize the director of the Democratic staff, Elizabeth King, and the director of the Republican staff, John Keast. They did a remarkable job, and they have led their staffs with professionalism and skill.

I would also like to thank the members of the Armed Services Committee staff: Jody Bennett, Carolyn Chuhta, Jon Clark, Jenny Davis, Jonathan Epstein, Jorie Feldman, Kevin Gates, Creighton Greene, Gary Leeling, Kirk McConnell, Maggie McNamara Cooper, Bill Monahan, Meredith Werner, Mike Noblet, John Quirk, Andy Scott, Cole Stevens, Isabelle Picciotti, Alison Warner, Leah Brewer, Sean Jones, Joe Gallo, Brittany Amador, Griffin Cannon, Sofia Kamali, Chad Johnson, Julia Coulter, Vannary Kong, Noah Sisk, Zachary Volpe, and, once again, staff director Elizabeth King.

That was a long list, but it is a fraction of what they have put into this, in terms of time and effort, and we could not have accomplished this without them.

I want to thank the floor staff and the leadership for all they have done to make this possible.

Finally, I urge all my colleagues to support this excellent bill.

With that, I will yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I am pleased and honored to join my colleague from Rhode Island, the distinguished chairman of the Armed Serv-

ices Committee, in urging adoption of this important step in getting our National Defense Authorization Act passed and signed into law.

It is routine now and profound at the same time. It is routine because, as the chair said, this is the 63rd time that this House and this Senate will have come together on a bipartisan basis to join hands and try to move our national defense forward.

It is profound because it has become routine, because no matter what other things we are discussing and differing about and expressing our deeply held views, this is something that we feel must be done every year, regardless of the other things that divide us. So the fact that it has become routine does make this a profound step, and I am honored to be part of that great list of persons who have been part of this.

Senator REED is absolutely correct to thank our counterparts in the House, Chairman ROGERS and Ranking Member SMITH, and our staff.

Let me also give a shout-out to the ranking members of the subcommittees, who took this from subcommittee to subcommittee to the full committee and helped us get started in a very meaningful way: Senator COTTON, ranking member of Airland; Senator MIKE ROUNDS, Cybersecurity; Senator JONI ERNST, Emerging Threats and Capabilities; Senator RICK SCOTT, Personnel Subcommittee; Senator DAN SULLIVAN, Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee; Senator KEVIN CRAMER, Seapower, a committee that I served on as ranking member and as chair; and Senator DEB FISCHER, who has worked so diligently in a very technical and important area, Strategic Forces.

And then, as the chair mentioned, I will try not to leave out any of the staff—the experts who took our concepts and who were able to put them into words that became statutory language. Of course, there is John Keast, the staff director on our side, who has been a great partner of Elizabeth King; and then other talented, just absolutely brilliant and diligent and hard-working American public servants who helped get it right: Rick Berger, Brendan Gavin, James Mazol, Greg Lilly, Adam Barker, Zach Barnett, Kristina Belcourt, Jack Beyrer, Travis Brundrett, Isaac Jalkanen, Kevin Kim, Eric Lofgren, Katie Magnus, Jonathan Moore, Sean O’Keefe, Brad Patout, Katie Romaine, Pat Thompson, Eric Trager, Adam Trull, Olivia Trusty, and Phillip Waller.

And I wouldn’t be surprised if I have left somebody out, even so, Mr. President.

It does contain some very high hopes and dreams, and I hope this legislation builds on an opportunity for further expansion of our defense industrial base, because so many of the things that we need to do cannot be done unless we have got the resources in place to actually put Americans to work making our country stronger.