

not only threaten to raise prices and decrease innovation but would give the Federal Government and the Biden administration a dangerous amount of control over Americans' internet experience.

I have led a letter with more than 40 of my colleagues calling for the Biden FCC to abandon this just incredibly ill-advised proposal, and I will continue to urge my colleagues of both parties to oppose this alarming measure because if the Biden FCC has its way, we may soon find ourselves dealing with the very opposite of net neutrality.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. Lujan). 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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.

IRAN

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, earlier this week, the American people received the tragic news that two Navy SEALs died during a nighttime raid near Somalia.

Somalia is a world away from here, but what happens in that region has a direct impact on us here at home because one of these Navy SEALs was from the great State of Texas.

These men and their brave comrades were seizing a vessel that was carrying Iranian-made arms intended for Houthi rebels in Yemen.

I know, after 9/11, there was a famous country-western song—I think “Where Were You (When The World Stopped Turning)” —and one of the lines was, ‘I don’t know the difference between Iraq and Iran.’

Well, the truth is, the American people have had to learn a lot about world geography, unfortunately, because things that happen far away from our shores have a direct impact on us and on the potential for regional war or worse to break out.

The Houthis, as some may know, are a terrorist group. They occupy Yemen, which is south of Saudi Arabia and right next to Oman. You may have to get out your maps to place it. But this is a terrorist group that has been engaged in a civil war in Yemen for many years now and has attacked Saudi Arabia and has been subject to retaliation by Saudi Arabia and the Emirates for some time now. But, unfortunately, they have proven to be enormously resilient.

They have a disturbing ideology. They are known for their saying “God is great. Death to America. Death to Israel. Curse on the Jews. Victory for Islam.” That is their motto. There is no mystery about their intentions.

In the wake of the invasion by Hamas on Israel on October 7, the Houthis have escalated their attacks in the region—again, supplied by Iran with weapons that they have used not only

to attack Saudi Arabia but also to try to attack Israel and American forces in the region.

They have launched dozens of drone and missile attacks on commercial ships traveling through the Red Sea and bound for the Suez Canal. This is an area of the world where international commerce is so important. Goods that flow between the Red Sea and the Suez Canal do everything from provide us with the commodities that make our lives better to provide the energy necessary for countries around the world. The U.S. Central Command described these attacks as a direct threat to international commerce and maritime security.

The Houthis only have the resources to carry out these attacks because of the support they receive from Iran. Like Hamas, another Iranian proxy, the Houthis and other terrorist groups in the region are armed, trained, and funded by Iran.

On the evening of January 11, a heroic group of Navy SEALs seized a vessel carrying ballistic missiles and cruise missile components destined for Houthi forces. They prevented the Houthis from receiving even more weapons that could be used to target U.S. forces or commercial ships in the region.

Now, you can imagine that boarding an enemy vessel is a dangerous and difficult mission, but doing so in the dead of night, in rough seas, while loaded with heavy equipment, is even more perilous.

While boarding the ship, Special Warfare Operator 2nd Class Nathan Gage Ingram, a Texan, fell into the Arabian Sea. Following SEAL protocol, Special Warfare Operator 1st Class Christopher Chambers heroically jumped in, trying to save him. Well, unfortunately, the U.S. Navy and our allies have now conducted a thorough search and rescue operation, covering more than 21,000 square miles over 10 days, but sadly their bodies were never recovered.

These men represent the very best of our country. They exemplify the courage and selflessness that generations of American servicemembers have embodied. Our hearts go out to the families of these brave Navy SEALs who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country.

But this is a reminder of the immense risks our servicemembers face every single day. They sacrifice time away from their loved ones and place their lives on the line to keep our country safe. Given the chaos unfolding around the world, which seems to be getting worse and worse, the threats they face continue to grow.

As we all know, in recent months, the tensions in the Middle East have escalated dramatically. As I mentioned, Hamas carried out an attack on Israel on October 7. In Israel, they call this their 9/11—like the attack on September 11, 2001, that killed 3,000 Americans. The Houthis are disrupting, as I said, global commerce and freedom of

navigation. Iranian-supported proxies in Iraq and Syria are attacking U.S. forces. Hezbollah, in Lebanon, is launching constant attacks on northern Israel.

Terrorist threats are intensifying throughout the Middle East, and the common thread uniting all of these attacks is Iran. Iran is the head of the octopus, and its tentacles of terror extend throughout the region. There is Hamas in Gaza, the Houthis in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza and the West Bank, and Shiite militias in Syria and Iran. Iran provides its terrorist proxies with funding, weapons, and training to enable the types of attacks we have seen in recent weeks. This chaos threatens to destabilize the Middle East even further and possibly start a much wider conflict.

Given the growing tensions in the Middle East, one of America's top priorities must be to reestablish deterrence. Iran needs to pay a price for using its proxies to attack the United States and U.S. interests.

This is absolutely vital to the future of Israel. Iran is a country driven by a dangerous ideology that calls for the destruction of Israel, and it will bleed the Iranian people dry in order to sustain that fight.

But, as we know, Iran's ambitions do not end with Israel. The Supreme Leader once labeled the United States as Iran's “number one enemy.” Until recently, Iran felt intense pressure from the United States. The Trump administration withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal and placed sanctions on hundreds of businesses and individuals who helped finance Iran's illicit activities. It also brokered the historic Abraham Accords, which served as a major blow to Iran as like-minded nations in the region normalized their relationship in order to counter their common adversary: Iran.

The maximum pressure strategy dissolved as soon as President Biden took office. It seems to be the guiding philosophy of President Biden that if President Trump did it, President Biden will undo it, and that is what happened here.

Less than a month into his Presidency, President Biden made the foolish decision to remove the government designation of the Houthis as a terrorist group. Given the brazen attacks that I have mentioned, President Biden has now reversed that decision last week but only partially. The President has only redesignated the Houthis as a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist.” He also failed to reclassify them as a “Foreign Terrorist Organization,” as they were before President Biden took office. The truth is, I doubt this will have any impact on the Houthis. Unfortunately, it is just one of many examples where President Biden's weakness toward Iran has not provided greater peace and stability but more dangerous circumstances. It actually has emboldened our adversaries.

President Biden has made no secret of his intent to revive the Iran nuclear deal while Iran continues to enrich uranium. If Iran gets a nuclear weapon, Saudi Arabia won't be far behind and other countries in the region will try to figure out how they can defend themselves against the No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism that now, instead of just missiles and drones, has a nuclear weapon. You can imagine what might come from that set of circumstances, and it is frightening.

Then the administration has loosened sanctions on Iran's oil sales. Iran's economy, not surprisingly, has rebounded. China—that imports about 70 percent of their energy needs—has now entered into a strategic partnership with Iran because they need the oil that Iran produces along with the oil and gas produced by the Russian Federation.

Of course, we all know President Biden carried out the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan without even consulting our friends and allies, which created a power vacuum in the region that is now being filled by—you guessed it—Iran.

The administration unfroze billions of dollars in Iranian assets, giving Tehran even more money to pour into its terrorist proxies. It failed to take quick and decisive action to respond to Iran's attacks on U.S. forces in Syria. In other words, it is not enough for us or Israel to attack proxies. We need to go after the head of the octopus, not the tentacles. President Biden has consistently projected weakness when it comes to Iran. They understand weakness, but they also understand strength. This administration has steadily loosened the pressure valve, and now we are seeing the consequences with an emboldened Iran.

Appeasement is not a viable strategy. It never has been and never will be, particularly when these countries understand nothing but strength. If they experience mush, it is, in fact, an incentive or provocation for them to keep doing what they are doing.

President Biden should have known from the beginning. He served in the Senate as the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee for many, many years. He is worldly wise, but he seems incredibly naive when it comes to what it takes to deter state sponsors of terrorism like Iran.

The only way to counter the growing threat is by reestablishing deterrence. That can only be achieved through strong and decisive leadership and reciprocal counterstrikes not on the proxies alone, but on the head of the octopus.

Sadly, President Biden has spent the last 3 years projecting this image of weakness and uncertainty. Given the chaos Iran has unleashed in the Middle East, it is time for a swift change in strategy. President Biden needs to work with Republicans and Democrats in Congress to confront threats from Iran and reestablish a credible deter-

rence in the Middle East. Iran needs to understand that attacks against the United States and our allies will not be met with kid gloves. Until that happens, Iran and its proxies will continue to escalate their attacks and threaten the possibility of even a wider war.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. PADILLA. I ask unanimous request that I am able to complete my remarks before the beginning of the vote.

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

NOMINATION OF KIRK EDWARD SHERRIFF

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, colleagues, today we will have the opportunity to advance the nomination of Kirk Sherriff, President Biden's nominee to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California. In doing so, we have a chance to confirm a well-qualified nominee and public servant to fill a vacancy on one of the busiest and most understaffed district courts in the Federal judiciary.

I rise to share a little bit more about what makes him so qualified to serve the Eastern District. Mr. Sherriff actually grew up in the Sacramento region within the district. He was raised for several periods of time by a single mother who worked hard to support her family, an experience he says profoundly shaped his appreciation for the opportunities made available in the United States of America.

Mr. Sherriff went on to earn his undergraduate degree from Columbia University and his law degree from Harvard Law School.

He began his legal career working as an associate of White & Case, focused on arbitration and civil litigation.

He also clerked on the New Jersey Supreme Court for Chief Justice Deborah Poritz. But before long, he returned to California—he came home—to work in the district that would come to define his career.

Mr. Sherriff joined the civil division of the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of California. He spent 5 years litigating forest fire, civil fraud, and tort cases before moving on to the criminal division.

He worked his way up to serve as chief of the Fresno and Bakersfield offices of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District where he oversaw four Fresno unit chiefs, 20 attorneys, and the prosecution of crimes throughout the southern half of the district.

Now, in the course of his career, Mr. Sherriff has developed a reputation in the Fresno legal community for being fair, for being sharp, and incredibly hard-working—all characteristics in high demand at a court with an extraordinarily heavy caseload.

But in addition to that, Mr. Sherriff possesses a deep personal understanding of the needs of the many racially diverse and historically disadvantaged communities throughout the Central Valley. Because, for the last two decades, he has been there, serving the Eastern District and engaging in community outreach.

Colleagues, by confirming Mr. Sherriff's nomination, we will be confirming a nominee with a wealth of legal experience, with a fundamental understanding and respect for human dignity, and with deep roots in the community he serves and will continue to serve, and who will be filling a vacancy in one of the busiest courts in the country.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in advancing and supporting Mr. Sherriff's confirmation.

NOMINATION OF GRETCHEN S. LUND

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Judge Gretchen S. Lund to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana.

Born in Elkhart, IN, Judge Lund earned her B.A., cum laude, from Butler University and her J.D., summa cum laude, from Valparaiso University School of Law. After beginning her legal career as an associate attorney with Ice Miller LLP, Judge Lund clerked for Judge William T. Lawrence on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana. Following her clerkship, she served as a deputy prosecutor with the Elkhart County Prosecutor's Office, where she handled cases assigned to the child support division. In 2006, she was elected to serve as the sole judge for the Goshen City Court, where she presided over criminal misdemeanors, infractions, and ordinance violations. In 2014, Judge Lund was elected to her current seat as the judge on Elkhart Superior Court 4. She presides over both civil and criminal matters and established the county's first drug court. Since joining the bench, she has presided over 27 jury trials, 489 bench trials, and approximately 28,000 cases that have gone to verdict or judgement.

The American Bar Association unanimously rated Judge Lund as "well qualified," and she has the strong support of Senators YOUNG and BRAUN.

Judge Lund's significant courtroom experience and dedication to service make her an excellent nominee to the Northern District of Indiana. I will vote in favor of her confirmation and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. PADILLA. I yield the floor.

VOTE ON LUND NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Lund nomination?

Mr. PADILLA. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.