

again after each one of the removals. This is very, very difficult work, and it is being done by true professionals. And, again, I thank the Federal Government for providing the experts who are all now in Baltimore, figuring out how to get that channel open.

And we are going to need a replacement bridge. This is a main corridor along the I-95 east coast of the United States, and 30,000 vehicles travel through it a day. So we need to replace that bridge. The bridge was built in 1977, 1.76 miles. It is an engineering marvel of its time for a suspension bridge, and it took 5 years to build. So we have an enormous challenge.

I had the chance to personally visit the site. Actually, I think I took this photo from a Coast Guard vessel. You see it. It is just a horrific site to see the work that is being done.

But I want to give a shout-out to the unified command headed by the Coast Guard. They started the day of the tragedy, and they have been there every day, 24/7, leading a unified command that includes the Army Corps of Engineers, which will do most of the salvage work within the channel itself. The Coast Guard, of course, is keeping everyone safe.

We also have the Department of Defense because we need some of their equipment in order to be able to move the debris.

It includes the Department of Transportation. Secretary Buttigieg was there the day of the incident. I talked to him early in the morning. A few hours later, I was with him at the site. And his team has been there every day, and he has returned to provide relief.

I want to thank him for giving us the emergency relief funds, immediately approved, so we could start doing the work in regards to the traffic problems that we had and starting to plan for the replacement of the bridge. I want to thank him for that. Those emergency funds of \$60 million were desperately needed. We got it immediately thanks to the commitment of the Biden administration.

I want to thank Administrator Guzman, of the Small Business Administration. She was there. I talked to her, I think, a day or two after the episode. She came to Baltimore and had a roundtable discussion to talk to the small businesses as to what they need. They are doing EIDL loans, and they have set up business recovery centers—one in Dundalk and one in Baltimore City—so the businesses can get the help they need on site.

And I was there. I have met with a lot of small business owners. They have lots of questions. They impressed upon me the urgency of their needs and that we need to coordinate our response.

I want to give a shout-out also to the Department of Labor, which has been there. They have provided us with displaced worker grants in order to help those who cannot get work so that we can deal with those who have been directly impacted.

Mayor Scott of Baltimore has been one of our true great leaders throughout this. County Executive Olszewski from Baltimore County and County Executive Steuart Pittman from Anne Arundel County—all have been involved in this, along with Senator VAN HOLLEN and Congressman MFUME.

I want to thank our colleagues. Senator SCHUMER was right there at the beginning, saying he is there to help wherever the Senate can.

I want to thank Senator MCCONNELL for his comments, where he said: In situations like this, whether it is a hurricane in Florida or an accident like this, the Federal Government will step up.

Now, the result of this has been that we have provided support for the families of the victims who lost their lives. We have met with the workers—the ILA workers—and we are trying to make sure they can get through this period of time.

We have met with small business owners.

The engineers here have been unbelievable. The Army Corps has been here 24/7. They have opened two alternative channels—one 14 feet, one 11 feet. That gets just a minimal amount of traffic through. But they are working on the northern part of the channel—that is not where the *Dali* is, but the other side of the channel—to open a 35-foot channel by the end of this month. If we can do that, that will return about 75 percent of the business to the Port of Baltimore, which will be extremely important for our economy. By the end of May, the engineers believe they can have the entire 50-foot channel opened.

In the meantime, we have improved Tradepoint Atlantic. Tradepoint Atlantic is not affected by the bridge. We were able to secure a grant for Tradepoint Atlantic in 2020 to help prepare it as a port facility. Those funds were reallocated in a matter of days from the accident so they could use it to pave 10 acres of property for roll-on/roll-off cargo that would normally go to a port inside of the bridge that will be now offloaded and can be done immediately.

The bridge. We already started with the design of the bridge. It may take some time. Remember, it took 5 years to build this originally. It may take more time before we can get that done. We need your support. We are going to need our colleagues to help us through this.

In Minnesota, the full-cost legislation was passed in a matter of days. We are going to be coming to Congress asking for some help in regard to the funding to make sure that 100 percent of it is paid for by the Federal Government. We recognize that when you have a catastrophic event like this, that we come together as a nation. We have done it in the past, and we are going to ask for help this time.

I know that there is going to be third-party liabilities. We hope there are moneys that can be recovered from

those responsible for this tragedy—in insurance proceeds, et cetera. Those funds will go to reimburse the taxpayers. We are going to be aggressive getting every dollar we can. But it cannot delay the opening of the channel and rebuilding of the bridge. We have to make sure that is done as properly as possible. Right now, traffic is detoured. It is a mess through that area. We have to get that bridge replaced.

The story of the Francis Scott Key Bridge does not end here. We will rebuild the bridge. In the 70 years that bridge has been open, the capacity has grown. Cargo capacity has grown in our region by 3,000 percent. The Port of Baltimore will remain strong and we will, as Governor Moore said, be “Maryland tough” and “Baltimore strong.”

I want to thank my colleagues for their understanding of this tragedy and their support as we move forward to open the Baltimore channel and to rebuild the bridge.

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.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ISRAEL

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, in 1948, President Truman recognized the State of Israel on behalf of the United States. He clearly called for the world “to accord the State of Israel the right of self-defense.”

In the decades since, American leaders have stood by Israel. Our support has been reliable, spanning Presidential administrations and congressional terms. It has been bipartisan. President Eisenhower continued President Truman’s promise to stand with Israel, establishing a bipartisan tradition cemented by Presidents from Kennedy to Reagan, from Clinton to Trump.

In America, voters regularly select new parties to lead our country. Administrations come and go. Congresses come and go. That volatility makes it all the more profound that we have always kept our solemn promise to stand with our allies.

It has now been 75 years since President Truman made this vow. For those many decades, Israel’s position has always been and will be to live peacefully in its ancestral land alongside its Arab and largely Muslim neighbors.

Slowly, often grudgingly, other nations in that region have come around to that position.

Egypt agreed to peace with Israel in 1979. Jordan has been a longtime U.S. partner and has lived in peace with Israel since 1994. Recently, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain agreed to partnership with Israel in the Abraham Accords.

One regime that has continually rejected the international consensus about Israel is the Islamic Republic of Iran. Three decades into the 21st century, Iran and its proxies continue to pursue Israel's absolute annihilation. Coexistence has never been the policy of Iran or its terrorist proxy group Hamas.

Disturbingly, we find adherents of that view here at home. Last week in Michigan, protesters chanted "Death to Israel" and "Death to America," rejecting either country's right to even exist. This is one example of the rise of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic incidents we have seen since October 7. They show us what our Jewish friends and allies fight against every day.

Of course, the protests and chants remind us of a pivotal event. Yesterday, we marked the 6-month anniversary of the October 7 attacks. Hamas, backed by Iran, demonstrated both its goal—the annihilation of Israel—and its strategy—the murder and hostage-taking of civilians.

October 7 was one of the worst attacks on the Jewish people since the Holocaust. It was a nightmare scenario that eight decades of Israeli citizens have had to guard against. In light of those atrocities, our task is clear: We need to reaffirm Israel's right to self-defense.

Since October 7, Hamas has continued to pursue its goal by the same strategies. It single-mindedly seeks to wipe Israel off the map and does not care how many innocent people are lost on the way, how many families are burned alive. Hamas's entire operation is a violation of international law. By contrast, Israel has essentially been striving to administer civilian aid while uprooting terrorists who hide behind those civilians—all in dense urban settings.

International friends and allies can and should give advice and counsel to each other on issues of mutual security and diplomacy. That has always been the practice between Israel and the United States. On the other hand, it is wrong to make demands of an ally and to suggest that vital aid to them will be withheld unless those demands are met. This is especially true when those conditions are ones which we ourselves could never accept.

War is always a tragedy. On top of that, it also carries accidental sorrows in its wake. The killing of seven World Central Kitchen aid workers was an avoidable and unmitigated tragedy. Our hearts break for their loved ones, their colleagues, and others delivering humanitarian assistance around the world.

And this is personal to me. Teams from World Central Kitchen have come to the aid of my State of Mississippi. World Central Kitchen was there on the ground during the recent Jackson water crisis. They answered the call in the wake of the 2023 tornadoes. I am an advocate and friend of Jose Andres. I have worn the "World Central Kitch-

en" cap in Poland when I spent time serving meals to refugees from the brutal Russian invasion.

I believe that Israel takes the workers' deaths seriously too. The Israeli Defense Forces assumed responsibility right away. Its leaders promptly launched an investigation. Since then, the Israeli Government has said that the military committed "serious violations" of protocol. They have admitted this about themselves. They fired two officers and disciplined three others for mishandling information and breaking the Israeli Defense Forces' rules of engagement.

That is more than the Biden administration can say about themselves. In the chaos of our disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal, our military shelled a car in Kabul. Leaders initially feared the vehicle carried explosives destined for American servicemembers, but it turned out to be a civilian vehicle, and 10 innocent people, including 7 children, died at our hands. The Biden administration took far longer than Israel to own up to that mistake. I am glad our country did eventually acknowledge our fault.

This shows that the free world holds ourselves to exacting standards of care for the innocent caught in harm's way—including the thousands who have died in Gaza since October 7.

Time and again, Israeli combatants have published warnings before taking a building. They regularly give evacuation notices to civilians. In so protecting the innocent, they risk giving the enemy a heads-up, but they do this. Yet it has become fashionable to hold Israel to unachievable standards, benchmarks to which we do not hold ourselves or any other ally.

Hamas does not place itself under such handicaps. This Iranian proxy, Hamas, has no regard for the standards of civilian protection. For one of many examples, look no further than the hostages taken October 7 and their often brutal treatment.

Unfortunately, our President's recent call for a cease-fire plays directly into Hamas's hands. Our Commander in Chief's priority should be the release of hostages and victory for our ally. But instead of displaying American resolve, our President seems to be mollifying the left wing of his party.

Calling for a cease-fire instead of hostage release and unconditional victory creates a false equivalence between Israel and Hamas. After Pearl Harbor, no one asked us about a cease-fire. After 9/11, no one asked the United States about a cease-fire.

We need to remember that Israel is fighting terrorists bent only on the destruction of the Jewish State. Hamas's leadership has vowed to commit repeats of the October 7 massacres. If this terrorist group is not totally eradicated, it will continue killing and kidnapping.

To paraphrase former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, if Hamas put down their weapons today, there would

be no more violence; if Israel put down their weapons today, there would be no more Israel.

Hamas started this conflict, and they could end it today. Hamas could let hostages walk out of the tunnels and into the sunshine. Its militants could stop using women and children and aid workers and healthcare workers as human shields.

We need to give our steadfast ally what it needs to win this battle. Victory has to be our position.

I believe we should keep our promises to our friends. Our Commander in Chief threatens to break that promise to Israel today.

The President's call for an immediate cease-fire is tantamount to a call for Hamas to remain in business, to reestablish itself for future atrocities. That is not something Israel will allow—nor should they—and it is not something we should ask of Israel or any other partner or ally.

A world in which a terrorist organization can win by committing mass murder is a more dangerous world for us all. The allies who have stood by us for 7½ decades and who stood by us after 9/11 understood that then, and we should not forget that now.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO RICK WEBB

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I rise today to recognize Watco Executive Chairman Rick Webb, who recently was inducted into the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association's Short Line Hall of Fame.

Watco is a transportation and supply chain service company headquartered in Pittsburg, KS, with a 40-year legacy of excellence in industrial transportation. Rick Webb has been, and continues to be, an integral part of that legacy.

Rick's father, Dick Webb, founded the company in 1983, and Rick began working on the Watco team while he was finishing his degree at the local Pittsburg State University.

He joined the family business full time after graduating in 1984, taking on a diverse portfolio of responsibilities including operations, marketing, hiring personnel, and raising capital.

In 1987, Watco purchased its first short line to primarily serve its own railcar repair shop. In 1998, Webb became Watco's chief executive officer, taking the reins from his father. After two decades of service as Watco's chief executive, Rick turned over leadership to Dan Smith and took on the role of executive chairman, where he continues to steward the growth of the business and the family's customer-first model of service.