

The message was clear: If you put American lives in danger, you will be destroyed. There was no escalation. The conflict did not spiral into an uncontained war. Deterrence was restored.

Compare that powerful and effective example of deterrence to where we are today. Another Iran-backed group, Hamas, attacked our ally Israel on October 7. The President said that the United States would stand with Israel and that he would not tell Israel how to conduct its war against this terror. Since then, his administration has all but folded to the demands of those in his party who want to condition aid and support to our ally.

Since October 7, Iran-backed militias have attacked U.S. troops not once, not twice, but more than 150 times. President Biden has allowed not days, not weeks, but months of unanswered attacks by Iran-backed Houthis on U.S. ships and civilian cargo vessels in the Red Sea. What was the inevitable result of the President's hesitation? The tragic deaths of three American troops at the hands of an Iran-backed militia, with dozens more seriously injured in that attack. And let's not forget that two Navy SEALs gave their lives just days before. They died trying to stop Iran from supplying weapons to similar militia groups across the region.

This administration likes to say that it doesn't want to escalate the situation. President Biden doesn't want Israel to escalate its justifiable war, and he doesn't want the United States to escalate our defense of Americans. His administration has said it wants to avoid escalation so much that it is beginning to seem like he is more afraid of being blamed for escalation than he is afraid of Americans being killed. But we should be clear: The only attacks President Biden is deterring are our own.

It is time to realize that our enemies have already escalated. Our response must be strong enough so that we can restore deterrence. Militants, they have attacked Israel, targeted civilian ships, and now they have killed Americans—all funded and supported by Iran. To stand up for our country, to stand against the murder of Americans and to stand with Israel, we must clearly demonstrate to Iran that they will pay a price for their continued support of terrorism.

Public reports say that President Biden is considering options for a retaliatory strike against Iranian forces. Whatever he decides to do, it must not follow his now well-established pattern of too little, too late. President Biden must finally restore credible deterrence, which is the only way that we will prevent escalation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BUDD. Madam President, over the weekend, our Nation lost three servicemembers in a drone attack in Jordan. Responsibility for this attack

rests with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Sadly, what happened over the weekend, it is not a surprise. It has been happening for months.

Iran and their proxies have launched more than 165 attacks against U.S. troops across the Middle East and countless more against commercial and military vessels in the Red Sea.

There has been a consistent drumbeat of Iranian-backed proxy attacks since the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel.

A few things are clear about this situation. First, Iran and its proxies, they do not currently fear the United States.

Second, Iran is intent on harming the United States, our servicemembers, and our interests.

Third, Iran is aiming to push the United States out of the Middle East in a bid for complete regional power. We can't let this takeover happen.

Iranian dominance in the Middle East would jeopardize the free flow of international trade; it would endanger important energy resources as well as damage America's counterterrorism efforts. And in the shadow of October 7, if we were to abandon our Middle East allies, it would be open season on Israel and the Jewish people.

I have heard the views of many in this Chamber, ranging from those who favor an immediate military offensive inside Iran to those who want the United States to leave the region altogether. Instead of beginning another "forever war" or succumbing to isolationism, I would submit that there is a better way. And we don't have to go back very far in history to find it.

After a single American contractor was killed at the hands of Iran in 2019, President Trump ordered a strike that eliminated the head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force, Qasem Soleimani. We didn't start a war, and we didn't withdraw. We simply sent Iran's leaders a very clear message; that is, if you kill Americans, you will forfeit your life. And Iran pulled back.

That is deterrence, when all nations know for certain that we are willing to act in defense of our people. It is that clear understanding that actually prevents a wider conflict, and it is a breakdown in clarity that is provoking the Iranians to continue taking more dangerous—and ultimately deadly—shots at U.S. forces abroad.

We must end the failed Biden policy of appeasement toward Iran. We must also stop telegraphing U.S. responses so Iran and its proxies can move personnel, weapons, and equipment out of the target area. Weakness only invites further aggression.

We must reestablish deterrence, and we must respond with the strength that this moment requires. No more half measures, hesitation, or muddled messages. Iran and their proxies must know that when the United States of America tells them to stop, we mean it, and we are willing to do something

about it. Without a strong response, the risk of escalation only increases and, with it, the danger to America.

One other note before I yield the floor, all of my colleagues and I are here today to stand shoulder to shoulder with the nation of Israel. They are one of our closest friends and allies. That is why it is highly disturbing to read reports that the Biden administration is reviewing options to reward the extremism and barbarism of Hamas by unilaterally recognizing a Palestinian state. This would represent a major reversal of longstanding U.S. policy and would be a betrayal of our friend and ally Israel. The Biden administration must abandon any consideration of such a dangerous and foolish proposal.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

ISRAEL

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I rise today to once again stand in strong support of our friend and ally Israel and to highlight the continued fallout that we are witnessing as a result of the October 7 terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas.

It is really difficult to describe those 116 days that we have had since October 7 as anything other than shocking, as we have seen the senseless murder of over 1,200 people in Israel, widespread violence across the Middle East, and alarming rise of anti-Semitism right here in the United States.

Just this past weekend, on January 27, we recognized International Holocaust Remembrance Day and honored the 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust—the largest genocide in human history with unspeakable horror inflicted on the Jewish people. This commemoration serves as a reminder of why the State of Israel must exist and our continual commitment to stand against the persecution of the Jewish people.

But now, nearly 80 years later, the safety of the Jewish people is once again under siege. I never thought I would make that statement.

The terrorist attacks on October 7 killed the most Jews in 1 day since the Holocaust. Hundreds of women and children were taken hostage, including our very own Americans who still remain in captivity today. And, shamefully, some of the most prominent organizations that claim to support women were silent when it came to Hamas's use of sexual violence against women and girls on October 7.

We must continue to universally denounce the barbaric tactics of Hamas and do all that is in our power to free the hostages and bring those American hostages home.

It remains clear that Israel has the right to defend themselves, as any country would, in the face of this unprovoked terror. There isn't another country in the world that would be expected to sit back and allow this to

happen, allow their next-door neighbor—whose own charter calls for genocide—to commit this kind of brazen and indiscriminate violence.

To this day, Hamas continues to fire rockets at Israel, target their civilians, and hold women and children hostage. That is all in violation of international law. They also continue to use protected civilian structures for its operation, endangering its own people.

There is no question that our world has dramatically shifted since October 7, as we can clearly see that Israel's security is directly related to our own national security here at home.

Unfortunately, since the beginning of the attacks on Israel, President Biden has not displayed the strength that is needed for our Nation at this critical junction. His administration, beginning on October 7, made their fears of an escalating conflict crystal clear.

Secretary Blinken said on October 22 that "This is not what we want. . . . We don't want escalation."

This widely broadcasted fear of escalation prevented them from taking action to stop this violence spreading beyond Israel's borders.

Now the Iran-backed Houthis have launched hundreds of drone and missile strikes against ships transiting the Red Sea, one of the most important waterways in the world. We have conducted multiple airstrikes in Yemen but with no clear indication that the Houthis have been deterred. And most especially sad, we lost two Navy SEALs, some of our most elite members of the Armed Forces who made the ultimate sacrifice while halting the shipment of more advanced weapons to this group.

Adding to this, there has been a staggering increase in attacks by Iranian proxies on our troops and bases in the region.

I think we have heard earlier, there have been over 165 attacks on our men and women in uniform in the Middle East since October 7, with minimal response from this administration. This has led, sadly, to another loss of our American soldiers. We lost three heroic Americans in one of these attacks, with dozens more wounded.

Less than 3 weeks ago, on January 12, when asked if he had a message for Iran, President Biden said:

I've already delivered the message to Iran. They know not to do anything.

That message was clearly not delivered and has put our Nation and servicemembers in an unacceptable situation.

What does all of this aggression in the Red Sea and these attacks on our Armed Forces have in common? It is all funded and supplied by Iran. For far too long, this nefarious nation has been pulling strings behind the scenes that are inciting terror and creating chaos in the Middle East.

The Iranian regime stands in direct opposition to what we as Americans represent and our values. Their hatred for America is made more obvious by

the company they keep and the continued closeness they are cultivating with adversaries like Russia, China, and North Korea.

China is Iran's biggest oil customer and provides a revenue stream to support Iran's aggression. Russia continues to purchase Iranian drones, using them in their unjust war against Ukraine. North Korea has remained Iran's leading partner in destabilizing actions and nuclear proliferation.

Iran's malign influence and its disdain for America and our ally Israel is unmistakable.

It is past time to reestablish deterrence against Iran with a decisive response to these unacceptable actions. This is something my Republican colleagues recognize and something we continue to urge President Biden and his administration to take seriously.

Secretary Blinken himself said just this past week that the Middle East has not been this dangerous since 1973. This comes, of course, after President Biden's National Security Advisor announced that the region was quieter than it had been for decades as we were approaching the October 7 date.

We can all see now that this is an increasingly important moment with incredibly high stakes. We must take this opportunity to lead with strength, to lead in the ways that only the United States can lead. While our adversaries are attempting to divide us, we must come together.

The future of our Nation depends on our ability to support our allies, like Israel, in their time of need; to protect vital American interests, like our ships; to defend our troops overseas; and to secure the homeland of our own country.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to remain committed to the security of the United States and our ally Israel. This Chamber must display the American leadership that times of crisis require. We have done it before, and we must do it again.

NOMINATION OF JOSEPH GOFFMAN

Madam President, I rise today in strong opposition to the nomination of Joe Goffman to lead the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Air and Radiation.

Mr. Goffman has been the Biden administration's leading political appointee in that office now for over 3 years without Senate confirmation. He also spent all 8 years of the Obama administration in the same EPA office. Rarely do we have such a robust record to draw on in evaluating a nominee. And I say this with great disappointment: Rarely is the record so damaging.

Mr. Goffman's actions, marked by Federal overreach and job-killing regulations, have been a disaster for our country. Under President Obama, Mr. Goffman was a chief architect of the Clean Power Plan. This rule aimed to close down coal- and gas-fired powerplants, especially those in my own home State of West Virginia, but it

was a direct shot at American energy production.

In 2022, the Supreme Court confirmed what we all knew: The original Clean Power Plan was illegal. Unfortunately, before this rejection, mines were shuttered, workers were laid off, and communities were left behind. Yet this has not fazed Mr. Goffman. Recently, in his current position at the EPA, Mr. Goffman has proposed the second iteration of the Clean Power Plan.

Many of us have warned a lot about the lawlessness and the danger of this regulatory plan, and I appreciate my colleagues on both sides of the aisle speaking truth to the EPA in recent letters about what this would do to our economy and to our energy sector. But you don't have to take it from us. Here is what our Nation's grid operators, which are nonpartisan groups responsible for ensuring our electrical system is reliable and affordable, said about the Clean Power Plan 2.0:

Without firm proof of the commercial and operational viability of these technologies, proceeding with these requirements could place the reliability of the electric grid in jeopardy. In short, hope is not an acceptable strategy.

Despite these concerns, Mr. Goffman is intent on implementing this part of a misguided climate agenda regardless of what the law says or its disastrous consequences on the reliability of the grid or the affordability of energy.

I have also spoken before about the Biden administration's rapid push toward electric vehicles despite warning signs and lack of a plan to deal with the inevitable increased electricity demand. Compliance with the EPA's current policy would require two-thirds of new cars to be electric by model year 2032, and now California wants to push the auto industry even faster, requiring that all new cars must be electric by 2035. And important to note, since Senator SCHUMER last filed cloture, Mr. Goffman's office has agreed to formally consider this request by California to ban sales of all new cars with internal combustion engines within the next decade. Well, we saw what happened with our electric vehicles during the cold spell we just had.

Meanwhile, automakers have sounded the alarm that Americans simply aren't buying EVs at rates that would match this pace and have scaled back previously announced investments. So the EPA is trying to force Americans to buy expensive electric cars—and they are more expensive—that they can't afford, at a rate they do not want. And this is all at Mr. Goffman's direction.

Already in 2024, we are seeing the courts working to correct the regulatory confusion created when the EPA Office of Air and Radiation oversteps its legal authorities. As an example, the EPA's so-called "Good Neighbor" regulation would remove the authority States have to manage their environmental policy under the Clean Air Act.

Initially, Mr. Goffman's rule targeted 23 States, and—you are right—one of