

Now, none of us, including this Senator, need a crystal ball to see what is on the horizon if the United States of America allows our military to wither on the vine. Unless Washington turns things around, the slippery slope that we are on will trigger an avalanche of no return. The U.S. military can't afford to play second fiddle to anybody or any country anywhere.

Our adversaries around the world take great delight when defense hawks clash here in the Congress with those who want to slash Pentagon spending to spend more on social programs. The "guns and butter" debate takes place every year when appropriators open and close the public purse.

A recent Gallup poll gauging the public's pulse on the U.S. military surprised me. I hope it surprised a lot of my colleagues. While I have long known Congress doesn't earn high approval rates from the public, I didn't expect public confidence in the military to slide to a level not seen since the threat to U.S. power during the Cold War. It dipped down to 60 percent in 2023, compared to a record high of 85 percent following the Gulf war, in 1991, and rising again after the attack in New York on 9/11.

Just 2 weeks ago, on Memorial Day, communities across Iowa and nationwide honored fallen hometown heroes. These are the beloved sons and daughters who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country, leaving their dreams and grieving Gold Star families behind. Throughout American history, tens of millions of American patriots have put their lives on the line to protect U.S. national security, defend our allies, and fight tyranny and terror from distant shores.

Since my first term in the U.S. Senate, I have worked hard to advocate for strengthening combat readiness and to ensure our troops have what they need to do their jobs. As a Pentagon watchdog, my efforts to root out waste, fraud, and abuse are rooted in one fundamental principle. That principle is the top priority of the Federal Government is national security, period.

The phrase "peace through strength" has become known as a Reagan doctrine and was espoused by my good friend from Russell, KS, Senator Dole. This philosophy aligns with my crusade to fix the fiscal mess that undercuts the Department of Defense and undermines the morale of our troops. Every dollar lost to fraud is one less dollar for military readiness.

However, my bipartisan work on this issue shows that I am not for writing the Pentagon a blank check. Protecting taxpayer dollars and boosting military readiness aren't mutually exclusive.

On January 8, 1790, in his first annual address to Congress, President George Washington said that "to be prepared for war is one of the most effectual [ways] of preserving peace."

Our Nation's 40th President continued President Washington's legacy at

the nominating convention 44 years ago in Detroit. Ronald Reagan said this:

We know only too well that war comes not when the forces of freedom are strong, but when they are weak. It is then that tyrants are tempted.

During his 8 years in the White House, President Reagan modernized the U.S. Armed Forces. The U.S. Army grew by two active divisions, and the United States developed new weapons systems to thwart nuclear attacks.

Reagan stared down the "Evil Empire." Those are his words as he referred to the U.S.S.R. and ended the Cold War. The Reagan doctrine taught us really what works.

On the other hand, the appeasement of Presidents Obama and Biden have only incentivized our adversaries to take another inch. Think of the uncertainty that we have today, which arguably stem from the Obama administration airlifting pallets of cash to Iran, followed by the Biden administration lifting sanctions.

Given their public action, I wasn't too surprised when FBI whistleblowers recently came to me with records showing just how easy on Iran the Obama-Biden administration really was. Their own Secretary of State, John Kerry, actively worked to prevent dangerous Iranians from being arrested in order to protect this reckless negotiation that ended up being the Iran nuclear deal.

It has never been a secret that Iran uses its wealth to underwrite terrorism in the hopes of wiping Israel off the map, and they also have a target on the United States.

To give another example, think of the uncertainty in Eastern Europe when Putin annexed Crimea in 2014. The world blinked. Now, he is waging war in Ukraine and itching to knock down the doors of the liberated Baltic States, Poland, and elsewhere to resurrect the old Soviet Union.

I want to remind my colleagues and the American people what the Russian President said in 2005 during his annual state of the nation message. Can you believe this? He called the collapse of the Soviet empire the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."

Something else Ronald Reagan said rings as true today as it did 40 years ago. He declared the Soviets "must be made to understand we will never compromise our principles and standards [nor] ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire. To do so would mean abandoning the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil."

Eighty years after D-Day, our Nation is at a crossroads. As we look ahead toward our Nation's 250th anniversary in 2026, America can't afford to blink.

I never imagined the lessons of the Holocaust would be questioned on the U.S. college campuses, particularly after the unprovoked atrocities and murders of innocent civilians on October 7 last year by Hamas. I never im-

aged isolationism would fuel Putin's brazen efforts to restore the old Soviet Union.

And let's not forget, President Xi has made no bones about his mission to usurp America's global leadership. American leadership has created the conditions for countries to pursue independence, self-determination, and freedom.

In contrast, President Xi seeks to expand China's global footprint through his sinister Belt and Road Initiative, debt-trap diplomacy, and outright military bullying. All of these tactics aim to export the Chinese Communist Party's model of state control over citizens' lives and exert a neo-imperial domination over countries all around the globe.

With intention, the communist Chinese Government silenced the 35th anniversary of the bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Communist leaders have all but scrubbed the murder of protestors by armed police and 180,000 troops from Chinese public memory.

Let there be no mistake, authoritarianism regimes use any means necessary to censor free speech, snuff out economic freedom, and pursue and persecute religious freedom.

When Putin and Xi talk about a multipolar world, they mean a world in which they can dominate smaller countries against that country's citizens' will.

In another speech, I will shine a light on religious persecution happening against groups like the Uighurs and other Muslim minorities, Tibetan Buddhists, and Christians in China, as well as Crimean Tatar Muslims, and Evangelical Christians in Ukraine.

Our Constitution guarantees freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, and the right to peaceably petition the government.

As we look forward to our Independence Day, I encourage all Americans to recognize and appreciate these freedoms. And if Americans want to guarantee these freedoms, peace and prosperity for generations to come, we cannot blink in our commitment to promoting peace through strength. If America doesn't lead, our allies won't follow and our enemies will no longer fear us.

I will close with one more piece of sage advice from President Reagan:

If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.

I yield the floor.

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. CORNYN. 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.

The Senator from Texas.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, for 3½ years, President Biden's border

policies have resulted in a crisis that has endangered the safety and security of the American people. When law enforcement is forced to spend their days pushing paper, processing, transporting, caring for migrants, it creates an opening for dangerous people and drugs to slip across the border and into our communities.

And, of course, this isn't a coincidence or accidental; it is actually part of the business model of the cartels to whom President Biden has outsourced our immigration policy. They control it—not the Border Patrol, not the Biden administration—criminal cartels that get richer every day smuggling people and drugs across the border. It is a booming business, thanks to President Biden's policies.

But last week, we got a striking reminder of the dangers that lurk in the shadows of this border crisis, one that, maybe, isn't being sufficiently paid attention to. One of these men used the CBP—that is Customs and Border Protection—app, which the Biden administration has been touting as a way for migrants to schedule their hearing before Border Patrol at the port of entry.

So one of the men last week used this app that was sold as a safe and orderly way to manage the crisis. But, clearly, this is not the case.

So this episode—which I will tell you more about in a second—this individual using this CBP app, it took nearly a year for the Biden administration to finally arrest the man in Baltimore, just 40 miles from the U.S. Capital. Once again, this was not an isolated incident.

But we know this is a recurring theme due to intentional policies. This isn't an accident. It is not just negligent. This is on purpose.

Here is a recent headline: Eight suspected terrorists with possible ties to ISIS arrested in New York, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia.

It is worrisome enough if individuals who are on the Terrorist Watchlist are detained at the border, but these eight men were arrested in major American cities far away from the border. All eight were from Tajikistan and entered the United States through the southern border, courtesy of the Biden administration's open border policies.

According to reports, at least two of these men crossed the border in the spring of 2023, more than a year ago.

Again, this was the one who used the CBP app, which was touted as a way to manage the flow of migrants across the border by the Biden administration as if this was an unqualifiedly good thing.

What we know in addition to these 8, just 2 months ago, ICE officers—that is Immigration and Customs Enforcement—in Baltimore, just down the road here from the Nation's Capital, arrested another man—this time from Uzbekistan—with ties to ISIS.

And just to remind everybody, ISIS is a successor organization to al-Qaida. This is a radical terrorist organization that is determined to kill as many in-

nocent Americans and Europeans and non-Muslim believers as possible. But this individual in Baltimore with ties to ISIS was released by the Biden administration in February of 2022.

Now, a little more than a year later, Uzbekistan put out a global notice that this man was, indeed, wanted in his home country for terrorist ties.

Well, just as a reminder: It doesn't take an army to carry out a devastating attack here in America. Twenty-three years ago, on September 11, 19 terrorists killed 3,000 Americans.

And then there is another incident in February where a member of the Somalia-based terror group al-Shabaab—that is another Islamic terrorist organization, this time headquartered in Africa—but a member of the Somalia-based terrorist organization al-Shabaab was arrested, this time in Minnesota. He had initially been released into the country by the Biden administration and allowed to roam freely for about a year.

This has become all too common under President Biden's leadership. Thank goodness, since 9/11, our country has become more sophisticated at identifying and stopping potential terrorist attacks. But the Biden border crisis—again, not accidental, not just negligent but intentional—has created a pathway for terrorists to slip into the United States undetected.

I appreciate, as always, the brave men and women of ICE and Customs and Border Protection and other law enforcement partners who have put these suspected terrorists behind bars. But the reality of the situation is, they never should have been roaming freely in our country in the first place.

This has been part of a conscious policy of President Biden. We have laws that are designed to prevent this exact situation from happening. But if you don't enforce the law, which the Biden administration refuses to do, this is what happens. Terrorists should not be able to cross the southern border. People who are not legally in the United States should not be allowed to cross the southern border. They shouldn't be released by law enforcement, and they absolutely shouldn't be able to move freely across the United States for more than a year.

So this is another case of multiple points of failure. And the Biden administration is responsible for all of them. As the American people know, President Biden has now issued 95 executive orders, 94 of which were specifically designed to dismantle the border security protections that President Trump had put in place.

President Biden purposefully eliminated the most effective measures to maintain a safe and orderly southern border. On day one, he stopped building the physical infrastructure, known as the wall; halted deportations; and ended the "Remain in Mexico" policy—this was just on day one.

In his first 100 days in office, as I said, President Biden has issued 94 ex-

ecutive orders, laying the groundwork for the security crisis that we find ourselves in today. This is the direct result of President Biden's intentional policies. He has dismantled policies that are designed to eliminate illegal border crossings, and he has actually crafted policies that serve as a magnet for additional illegal immigration.

I was just reading on social media that the President is supposedly going to issue another Executive order, this time providing additional work permits and a pathway to a green card and potential citizenship to people who entered the country illegally. This is what the Border Patrol calls a pull factor. It is like a magnet attracting people into the United States who know that if they wait long enough, President Biden will find some way to allow them to stay in the United States, even though they circumvent legal means of coming into the country under our immigration laws.

Now, I don't think anybody is fooled by President Biden's sudden interest in what is happening at the southern border. This is a last-ditch attempt to turn down the heat on the border crisis in the lead up to the election.

And the American people aren't buying it because they are smart. No matter how much spin our Democratic colleagues try to put on the situation, the American people know who is responsible. As this crisis was ramping up during the early days of the Biden administration, the President and his allies went to great lengths to avoid even talking about the border, even as he was dismantling the prior protections.

They essentially placed a ban on the use of the term "crisis" and came up with creative phrases to describe what is happening: a challenge, a situation, a mess—anything to deceive the American people into thinking it really wasn't that bad of a problem.

President Biden waited for 2 years to even visit the border. And it wasn't until January this year he finally admitted that the border isn't secure—something we have all known for 3½ years. He finally admitted it last January. He went on to add—this was a curiosity. He went on to say that he believed the border hadn't been secure during the last 10 years. Very strange.

So it took President Biden 3 years to even acknowledge the security crisis that has been raging since he took office.

I say all this to remind President Biden, Senate Democrats, and our friends in the media how we got here, because memories appear to be short around this town. For 3½ years, President Biden and Senate Democrats were silent about the crisis at the border because they liked the result—9, maybe 10 million people coming across, the drugs that killed 108,000 Americans last year alone, 500,000 unaccompanied children who have been placed with sponsors and lost track of by the Biden administration—these were all the direct result of President Biden's border policies.

So rather than just sitting by and watching this happen, they actually made it worse. They fomented this crisis with open border policies they started implementing on day one.

And after that, they didn't want to acknowledge the existence of a crisis, let alone work with this side of the aisle to try to craft solutions to address it. But because of their malfeasance, the border crisis has grown and grown and grown. And it continues to put the American people at risk.

I believe that a terrorist attack on American soil again is not a matter of "if" but a matter of "when" as a result of the fact that terrorist organizations have facilitated the entry of their allies and supporters across the border into the United States.

President Biden's policies are responsible for these terrorists crossing the border and slipping into our communities. They are responsible for the fentanyl that has taken the lives of 74,000 Americans last year alone, the leading cause of death of young people between the ages of 18 and 45. And they are responsible for the humanitarian crisis that is burdening communities thousands of miles from the southern border.

Thanks to President Biden and his policies, every community is now a border community. But the threats that come across the border don't just stay at the border or even border States, like mine. They fan out across the country.

Regardless of how many executive actions that the President takes today or how forceful his rhetoric is when he talks about the border, the American people see this 11th-hour conversion for what it is: an election year stunt.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURPHY. 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.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President and colleagues, this is a speech I have been thinking about giving for a long time. I think it is a speech somebody needs to give, but it is hard. There is some really awful stuff I am going to talk about, things that cut deep when we think about who we are, when we think about how we handle crises and emergencies, about the things we need to do as a human race to feel safe.

I want to talk to you today about what happened on May 24, 2022—almost 2 years ago—at an elementary school in Uvalde, TX. After 2 years of review, investigation, hand-wringing, grief, and anger, we now have as full a picture of what happened that day as we ever will, and we need to talk about it because it is important.

Here is what we know: 1 hour and 17 minutes after a gunman entered Robb Elementary School and opened fire on two classrooms full of children, 54 minutes after a school police officer got a call from his wife, who said that she had been shot in her classroom, 38 minutes after a 9-1-1 dispatcher told police there were confirmed victims in the classrooms, only then did a team of officers finally enter room 111 at Robb Elementary School and kill the gunman—1 hour and 17 excruciating minutes. The kids inside those classrooms—9, 10, 11 years old—and their teachers waited to be saved by the people whose job it was to keep them safe.

The students in rooms 111 and 112 had prepared for this moment. They had practiced what they should do if something like this were to happen: Drop to the floor. Sit along the walls farthest from the door and the windows. Crouch under desks, countertops—anywhere you could be safe.

They stayed silent—so silent that the officers on the other side of the door thought that there couldn't possibly be children inside. Surely, they would be crying out. But they were doing, in fact, exactly what they were told to do. They were doing their part.

As the minutes went on, outside the classroom stood not 10 armed officers, not 50, not even 100. Outside the classroom and surrounding the school, 376 armed officers were present—outside the classroom.

Inside the classroom, 10-year-old Ailyn Ramos hugged her friend Leann Garcia to stop her from screaming out in pain.

Inside the classroom, Elsa Avila, a teacher in room 109, tried to stay conscious after a bullet ripped through her stomach. Her students whispered to her:

Miss, we love you. You're going to be OK.

They told each other:

Don't let her go to sleep.

Inside the classroom, 10-year-old Khloie Torres and Miah Cerrillo called 9-1-1, begging for help.

Inside the classroom, Khloie and Miah's classmate Kendall Olivarez sobbed in pain as she lay stuck under their teacher, who had already been killed.

As 33 students and 3 of their teachers spent an hour and 17 minutes trapped in a room with an active shooter, there were hundreds of armed adults who stood outside. Doing what? Well, they were doing the things that would naturally occur to you if you heard that a man with military weapons and hundreds of rounds of ammunition is just around the corner from you on a killing spree. They were scared. They were disorganized. They were panicked. They were frozen. There were good people amongst those 376, but they were all providing natural reactions given the circumstances. But that does not excuse their inaction. Of course it doesn't.

The adults—the adults—in Uvalde had bought into this idea that more se-

curity, more men with guns in schools would keep those kids safe. In fact, the Uvalde School District placed so much faith in the ability of armed security to keep schools safe that it had its own school police department. But all of those men with guns didn't protect those kids. The opposite happened.

How on Earth could this happen? How could there be 300 armed law enforcement officers doing nothing for so long as children called 9-1-1, as parents ran to the school and begged to be allowed in? How could those officers wait 1 hour and 17 minutes when the entire point of having a school police department full of men with guns is to stop something like this from happening?

Earlier this year, the Justice Department released a report to try to answer some of those questions. They spent 20 months reviewing hours of body cam footage, audio recordings, training logs. They interviewed 260 people who were there that day. The final report paints a damning and infuriating picture of what went wrong, and I think it is important to talk about it because it shows how flawed this promise is—this promise that good guys with guns is all that is necessary to stop bad guys with guns.

At 11:35, Sergeant Daniel Coronado heard gunfire and ran inside the school. Another round of shots grazed two officers who had been approaching the classrooms with him. One of those officers kept moving toward the classroom, but he turned back when realized that none of his colleagues had followed him.

Again, this reaction from those initial police officers is understandable. There was a madman inside that classroom. Instinct tells you to run away, not to run toward danger.

Then confusion set in—the second predictable element of an active shooter crisis. Sergeant Coronado relayed an unconfirmed report that the gunman was contained and had barricaded himself inside a classroom, leading officers to believe that they were dealing with a barricaded subject, not an active shooter. Active shooter training says rush into the classroom, but they didn't think it was an active shooter, so they didn't act with urgency.

Eventually, they just couldn't continue to rationalize standing idle because it was a barricaded suspect. They continued to hear gunfire. They learned that one of the officers' wives was shot inside the classroom. They heard over their radios that there were victims. Common sense would have told them that there were kids inside these classrooms. Forty minutes into this massacre, there should have been no doubt what they were dealing with. This was an active shooter. This was the time to enter the classroom, but instead they continued to wait.

Now, part of the confusion was that there was no clear command structure; there was no one to give orders. There were probably lots of men with guns who wanted to go in but were told that