

Recent estimates suggest the terrorists possess up to 200,000 rockets, missiles, drones, and precision-guided munitions, along with 25,000 active-duty militants—all of it pointed south at Israel, and all of it, as Hezbollah's leader has boasted, is from Iran.

Or consider Lebanon itself. Hezbollah is a cancer on the Lebanese State. It wields its power as a sectarian terror squad and leads a long trail of blood through its highest ranks of civilian government and civil society. Sunnis, Christians, Druze, and fellow Shiites—none are immune from Hezbollah's wrath.

Then, again, National Public Radio refers to Hezbollah as a "political" group. Perhaps the administration's officials' confusion is a symbol of their media diet or more likely the foundations of their foreign policy are fundamentally flawed.

Remember the declaration by the President's National Security Advisor early last fall that the Middle East was "quieter than it had been in decades." The absurdity of that boast in light of October 7 is striking enough, but even when it was written, it betrayed the administration's naivete toward glaring and abiding threats to Israel and America's national security interests in the region.

Iran's agents in Syria and Iraq had already fired hundreds of rockets at American forces on this administration's watch. Since last October, these attacks have only metastasized, including into the Red Sea. So was this an acceptable status quo? Was Hezbollah's steady preparation for war? Was Hamas's expropriation of humanitarian assistance in order to build terror tunnels?

The United States ought to stand with our friend Israel as it faces these terrorists down. The goal should not be simply to avoid escalating or to return to the status quo ante but to help Israel defend itself against terrorists bent—bent—on Israel's destruction.

We have a stake in ensuring Israel emerges from this conflict stronger and these terrorist organizations and their Iranian patron weaker. These same terrorists want to expel the United States from the region. We are the Great Satan, in their own parlance. Instead, by their misplaced obsession with escalation, the administration and Washington Democrats are actually making Israel's job harder.

If the President and Vice President want to see an end to the war in Gaza and prevent greater hostilities in Lebanon, then it is time to switch the focus of their diplomatic pressure.

Every time the administration officials try to tie Israel's hand in public comments and every time a U.S. Senator threatens to hold critical security assistance hostage, Hamas, Hezbollah, and their patrons in Tehran are emboldened.

If our colleagues want peace, it is time to show support for a nation founded on peace and resolve toward

terrorists whose reason for existence is chaos and violence.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Illinois.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, we are 1 week away from the deadline to fund the government.

It is an embarrassment that we return again and again to this precipice, realizing full well the disaster that shutting down the government creates for our Nation. Yet the House of Representatives goes through these contortions every time, ultimately, giving in to common sense and funding the government, at least temporarily.

I was relieved to hear last night that there is a bipartisan funding agreement reached finally after days of negotiations, one that maintains current funding through December 20 and avoids a government shutdown a month before the election.

Wouldn't it be great if the Senate and the House were to announce some dramatic, positive legislative measure on a bipartisan basis other than keeping the lights on in the Federal Government? That seems to be all they can achieve in the House of Representatives.

Thankfully, the agreement includes necessary provisions related to extending veterans' benefits, including one that enables the only joint DOD-VA facility in the country—one you know well—Lovell, located in North Chicago in our home State, to continue providing healthcare to servicemembers and veterans alike.

Imagine we were just hours away from the possibility of suspending basic lifesaving services at the Lovell institute for our veterans.

I am pleased this bipartisan negotiation led to an agreement free of poison pills and partisan cuts, but it should have been done a long time ago.

Unfortunately, many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle think funding the government is a partisan bargaining chip and not one of the most essential tasks in Congress.

Just last week, the House rejected Speaker JOHNSON's partisan government funding plan that would have pushed our job to fund the government until next March in 2025. A half-year delay was being proposed by the Republicans in the House.

It is no surprise that this unserious funding plan did not pass. Not only did the Democrats vote against it, but 14 Members of the Speaker's own party opposed it. He forced the vote anyway, wasting precious time on a proposal that even his own caucus questioned.

Now time is of the essence. If both sides and both Chambers continue to work in good faith, we can fund the government through December 20 with actions this week, before the September 30 deadline, but it will take cooperation from both Chambers. I hope we can find it.

DREAM ACT

Madam President, on another topic, it has been more than 20 years—20

years—since I introduced a bill known as the DREAM Act.

This legislation would provide a pathway to citizenship for young immigrants known as Dreamers, who were brought to our country as children. The DREAM Act would allow these young people to remain in the only home they have ever known, the United States of America.

In 2010, I sent a letter, joined by then-Senator Richard Lugar, a Republican from Indiana, asking President Obama to stop the deportation of Dreamers.

Twelve years ago, President Obama responded by announcing the DACA Program, which has protected more than 830,000 Dreamers from being deported.

These young people grew up alongside our kids with the same hopes and the same dreams. They came to their classroom each day and pledged allegiance to the same flag. These young people grew up and wanted to serve our country as doctors and teachers and engineers, first responders, and so many more valuable contributions to America. They contribute to our Nation virtually every single day. Yet they live in fear of their lives being uprooted because of congressional inaction and ongoing litigation.

The best way to understand this issue is to hear their stories. That is why, today, I would like to introduce you to the 144th and 145th Dreamers, whose stories I have shared on the floor of the Senate.

During Hispanic Heritage Month, these stories should give us even more appreciation for the contributions that immigrants make to our Nation.

Here are Giovanni and Michael Pimentel. They were born in Mexico and brought to the United States when they were 6 years old. They were raised in Greenville, TX. They had to quickly learn English and found an extra need to "prove themselves" in this new country. They were 6 years old.

They graduated from high school in the top 10 percent of their class and went on to Texas A&M University. Michael graduated from college with a triple major in chemistry, mathematics, and biology. Giovanni graduated with degrees in public health and political science.

Michael went on to earn his master's degree from Stanford University, and he is now pursuing his doctorate in pharmacology. Michael has observed disparities in the care of loved ones undergoing chemotherapy. As a result, he aims to specialize in oncology medication to improve outcomes for cancer patients, regardless of where they are from or what language they speak.

Meanwhile, Giovanni attended Loyola University New Orleans College of Law and graduated with honors. He became a licensed attorney in California in November 2022 and began working in unemployment law. He sat for the Texas bar in July, and his goal is to support the Texas Legislature as a legislative counsel.

To Michael, DACA means hope—hope that the United States will one day accept Dreamers and allow them to remain here without the threat of deportation. To Giovanni, DACA signifies promise—a promise to Dreamers that if they work hard and contribute to America, they will be granted protection and a pathway to citizenship.

It is long past time that we uphold our end of the bargain. Michael and Giovanni are not only role models; they are living representations of the American dream. It is time for us in Congress to protect these Dreamers.

Unfortunately, since President Obama established DACA, Republicans have waged a relentless, unending campaign to overturn this stopgap solution and to deport Dreamers like Michael and Giovanni back to countries they do not even remember.

This war against immigrants is mindless. We need to be safe for sure, but how can we ignore what immigrants have meant to this country? Last week, I went for a routine hospital procedure here in Washington. It was noteworthy that the doctor I had was from Syria, a young woman from Syria, the anesthesiologist was from Germany, and my nurse was from Ethiopia. Do you think I would bemoan these immigrants and want them to return to their country? I thank all three of them for coming to America and making this a stronger and better country and giving quality, professional medical service. It happens day in and day out.

I want to urge my colleagues not to ignore these Dreamers and their lives, which are at stake every single day. They need to live in America without fear of deportation. It is time for Congress to get to work on a bipartisan basis to pass the Dream Act. It was the right thing to do 20 years ago; it is the right thing to do today. These young Dreamers prove my case every single day of their lives.

I thank Members of the Senate who have supported me. We need more in the future.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. 4698

AMENDMENT NO. 3293

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the passage of S. 4698, action on the Peters amendment No. 3292 be vitiated and amendment No. 3293 be considered and agreed to, and the remainder of the order be in status quo.

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

The amendment (No. 3292) in the nature of a substitute was withdrawn.

The amendment (No. 3293) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “DHS Joint Task Forces Reauthorization Act of 2024”.

SEC. 2. AMENDMENT TO SECTION 708 OF THE HOMELAND SECURITY ACT OF 2002.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 708(b) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 348(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (9)—

(A) in subparagraph (A)—

(i) in clause (ii), by striking “and” at the end;

(ii) in clause (iii)(II), by adding “and” at the end; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

“(iv) a staffing plan for each Joint Task Force;” and

(B) by amending subparagraph (C) to read as follows:

“(C) not later than December 23, 2024, and annually thereafter, submit to the committees specified in subparagraph (B) a report containing information regarding—

“(i) the progress in implementing the outcome-based and other appropriate performance metrics established pursuant to subparagraph (A)(iii);

“(ii) the staffing plan developed for each Joint Task Force pursuant to subparagraph (A)(iv); and

“(iii) any modification to the mission, strategic goals, and objectives of each Joint Task Force, and a description of, and rationale for, any such modifications.”; and

(2) in paragraph (13), by striking “2024” and inserting “2026”.

(b) ANNUAL BRIEFING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall brief—

(A) the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate;

(B) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate;

(C) the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives; and

(D) the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives.

(2) TOPICS.—Each briefing required under paragraph (1) shall cover the latest staffing and resource assessment at Joint Task Force-East, including—

(A)(i) a determination of whether the current staffing levels of Joint Task Force-East are sufficient to successfully advance the mission, strategic goals, and objectives of such Joint Task Force; and

(ii) if such determination reveals insufficient staffing levels, the cost, timeline, and strategy for increasing such staffing levels; and

(B)(i) a determination of whether sufficient resources are being provided for Joint Task Force-East in accordance with section 708(b)(7)(a) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 348(b)(7)(a)); and

(ii) if such determination reveals insufficient resource levels, the cost, timeline, and strategy for providing any remaining resource requirements.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

WHISTLEBLOWERS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, as my colleagues know, I get a lot of information about wrongdoing in government from whistleblowers. A sig-

nificant part of my investigative activity is driven by whistleblower disclosures. To make that very effective, I have directed my investigative staff to cultivate those whistleblower relationships.

Whistleblowers share information with me that the government likes to hide from Congress and, indirectly, then hiding it from the American people.

Today, I am going to discuss a very concerning problem within the U.S. Postal Service. Based on whistleblower disclosures to my office, I have been alerted that the post office hired a registered sex offender as a letter carrier.

The employment was confirmed in writing by that same Postal Service. Based on whistleblower allegations, this employee disclosed his status as a registered sex offender on his job application.

If accurate, did the Postal Service then even bother to read his application before he was hired? After the Postal Service figured out what they had done, my office has been told via whistleblower disclosures that they put the employee on paid leave.

So I began digging deeper to figure out the extent of this problem at the Postal Service. Since then, the Postal Service has obstructed every effort that I have made to get the information that Congress is entitled to.

Wouldn't the American public like to know how many letter carriers are registered sex offenders? Where are they working? Do they travel near schools, homes, and where children are often seen?

Now, the Postal Service apparently disagrees. The Postal Service was asked by my staff for a list of letter carriers who are registered offenders.

Now, as you might expect, the Postal Service refused. So I and my staff asked for a list of letter carriers on the payroll. The Postal Service later said:

Current employees' names, titles, and duty stations are generally considered to be public information and releasable.

But then the Postal Service refused to provide the information because my staff might cross-reference the names on the public registries. Specifically, the Postal Service said this:

They have a personal privacy interest in protecting the fact that their names appear on a sex offender registry.

The Postal Service also said that it is refusing to provide this information because I “intend to use the provided list to infer what employees appear on the public sex offender registries.”

Now, it is time to get this straight for everybody. The names of Postal Service employees are publicly releasable, as admitted by the Postal Service to me in writing. These offender registries are public, which was also admitted in writing to me by the Postal Service. But the Postal Service says a privacy interest prohibits them from providing the names of all Postal Service letter carriers because my staff might cross-reference them on a public list? What a disgrace.