

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

The Senator from Texas.

DEFENSE PRIORITIES

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, under the misguided leadership of the Biden administration, our credibility—America's credibility—on the world stage has crumbled. Simply put, our friends no longer trust us, and our enemies no longer fear us.

The Biden administration's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan signaled to our adversaries and our allies alike that the United States could not be trusted.

With deterrence a mere memory, this gave the green light to Vladimir Putin to continue his ambitions in Ukraine and launch a full-scale invasion after invading Crimea in 2014.

This administration took it a step further, though, unfreezing billions of dollars in Iranian assets and allowing Tehran to pour even more money behind the Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Shia militias, its terrorist proxies operating throughout the Middle East. Of course, the administration did this with full knowledge of Iran's nuclear ambitions. But they didn't stop there. By removing the designation of the Iranian-backed Houthis as a terrorist group—a decision which the President later only partially reversed—President Biden practically invited them to start attacking international commerce in the Red Sea.

The dominoes were set, and now we are seeing them fall. Iran and its proxies have been emboldened and launched the most deadly terrorist attack on the people of Israel on October 7. Then there is North Korea, which has sent more than 10,000 troops to Russia, and some intelligence estimates that they might be willing to provide up to 100,000 soldiers in the coming months as part of Russia's effort to capture Ukraine.

Then, in the South China Sea, in another part of the world, the People's Republic of China—dominated and run by the Chinese Communist Party—continues to assert excessive and illegal maritime boundary claims, at times using force against our treaty ally, the Philippines, when they have attempted to resupply their ship, the *Sierra Madre*, near the Second Thomas Shoal.

So perhaps it should be no surprise to anyone, given the absence of effective American leadership, that President Xi, the President of China, has ordered the Chinese military, the People's Liberation Army, to be ready and capable to take Taiwan by force in 2027, 2 years from now.

If China's aggression in the Indo-Pacific goes unchecked, President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party will continue to threaten, intimidate, and ultimately invade China's neighbors. The CCP, Chinese Communist Party, will likely escalate its economic war against the United States by blackballing us from the biggest market in the world and starving our country of

critical supplies, including critical minerals.

It is no secret that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are now working in concert to undermine the United States and our allies. It is no exaggeration to say we are perhaps at the most dangerous environment, geopolitically, since World War II.

And we know from history that the beginning of wars becomes only clear in retrospect. We know that from the runup to World War II. This is a dangerous period and environment. So the United States must reestablish deterrence and must show the world that we are serious about confronting these threats and the reality head-on.

And while I admit this paints a rather grim picture, I am confident that the United States is headed toward a new chapter of "peace through strength," as Ronald Reagan said, this time with President Trump as our Commander in Chief.

I am glad to see President Trump has selected military veteran Pete Hegseth as the next Defense Secretary, Representative MIKE WALTZ as the National Security Advisor, and our friend and colleague Senator MARCO RUBIO as Secretary of State. And I am proud that my fellow Texan and my former colleague in Congress John Ratcliffe has been selected to direct the Central Intelligence Agency.

I am looking forward to working with these terrific individuals to reverse the disastrous policies of the Biden administration, but we all have our work cut out for us. But I am confident that, in these individuals, President Trump picked the right people for the job.

The first and most significant task at hand will be shoring up our Armed Forces, specifically the U.S. Navy. A revitalization of the Navy will be critical to deterring Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific as well as keeping AUKUS—our partnership with Australia and the UK—alive and well.

In order to pose a credible threat to the CCP, in order to maintain deterrence—which is our ultimate goal—we need to adequately resource the Navy as well. This starts with our shipbuilding capabilities. Secretary-designate Hegseth should waste no time in working with Congress on a shipbuilding plan.

We also stand ready to work with the Trump administration on a plan to reinvigorate our aging shipyards, which are struggling to attract and retain necessary talent. The Pentagon can streamline its specifications for building maritime assets, ensuring that they are linked to warfighting requirements.

Another priority must be improving military recruitment. I am pleased to see Secretary-designate Hegseth's commitment to ending the politicalization of our military. Given the Biden administration's needless focus on what divides us instead of what unites us, it is really no surprise that the number of

Americans voluntarily joining our military is at an alltime low. Reducing the diversity, equity, and inclusion bureaucracy will have the benefit of freeing up resources necessary to aid recruitment and rebuilding. By ending these culture wars and reorienting the Pentagon toward a commitment to excellence as a top priority, we will be better positioned to recruit a talented military ready to deter aggression anywhere around the world.

And the Pentagon must come to terms with our depleted arsenal of critical munitions. This includes replenishing our stock of long-range anti-ship missiles, joint air-to-surface standoff missiles, and the advanced medium-range air-to-air missiles.

Secretary-designate Hegseth can do this cost effectively by returning to policies that the Pentagon has disregarded in recent years. Mandatory fixed-price commercial contracts promote cost savings for the taxpayer. Contrast this with the Department of Defense's current model of cost-plus contracting, which has stifled innovation and allowed private sector contractors to outsource R&D costs to the taxpayer.

So we have a lot of work to do as a Congress and as a nation to bolster our commitment to our allies and shore up deterrence against our adversaries. But by reversing the damage done over the last 4 years by the Biden-Harris administration, we will be well on our way to a world where America's friends trust us once again and our enemies fear us once again.

I look forward to working with Secretary-designate Hegseth, Secretary-designate RUBIO, and President Trump to move this country in a better direction. I am confident that working together with that goal in mind we can work toward a safer and more peaceful world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

DREAM ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise today to discuss an issue I have been working on for 23 years, the plight of America's Dreamers. I first introduced the DREAM Act more than two decades ago with Republican Senator Orrin Hatch, who was then the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

This bipartisan bill would provide a pathway to citizenship for young immigrants who were brought to the United States as children and allow them to remain in this country, the only home many of them had ever known.

Dreamers grew up alongside our kids, with the same hopes and dreams of getting their first job, their driver's license, even going to college. Many have gone on to serve our Nation as doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, and first responders. Some have shown their loyalty to this country by serving in the Armed Forces.

Yet without congressional action, Dreamers spend every day in fear of

their lives being uprooted by the threat of deportation. Twelve years ago, in response to a bipartisan request from myself and Senator Richard Lugar, President Obama established the DACA Program.

DACA has protected more than 830,000 young people from deportation, all of whom were brought to this country as children, some as young as a few months old.

Now, I realize for many of us the outcome of this month's elections was not what we wanted, fought for, or voted for. However, my priority of providing a safe pathway to citizenship for Dreamers has not changed because of the election. No matter who sits in the Oval Office, I will work with the President in good faith to help provide these young adults a chance, finally, at the American dream.

I would like to share the story of a talented Dreamer. He is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for this country. He is the 146th story of Dreamers that I have highlighted on the Senate floor. His name is Chieh Wi Chen, brought to the United States from Taiwan when he was 11 years old, grew up in New York City, and believed in the importance of community and country. He eagerly registered for Junior ROTC in high school, enlisted in the Army in 2016, and earned his associate's degree in criminal justice from Queensborough Community College.

He was on Active Duty for 4 years, stationed at Fort Jackson, which was then known as Fort Lee, before being deployed to countries including Saudi Arabia and South Korea.

While he was deployed in South Korea, Chieh was able to take his oath of allegiance to the United States and become a citizen. Today, as an Army veteran, he is a proud owner of his own tea shop, creating jobs for others and supporting the local economy.

DACA opened a path for Chieh that allowed him to pursue the American dream. DACA was always intended as a temporary stopgap until Congress finally got around to fixing this broken immigration system in America. In Chieh's case, DACA was the stepping stone he needed to finally serve our Nation and reach his full potential.

Yet, since President Obama established the program, Republicans have waged a relentless campaign to overturn DACA and deport these Dreamers back to countries they never remember. Now this program is hanging by a thread in the courts due to legal challenges from Republican State attorneys general, and DACA recipients are forced to live with uncertainty every day.

Last September, a Federal judge in Texas declared the DACA Program illegal. Though the decision left in place protections for current DACA recipients while it is on appeal, Dreamers live in constant fear that the next court decision will upend their lives. The litigation has also prevented at least 100,000 additional Dreamers from registering for the program.

Madam President, our military is facing the most serious recruitment challenge in modern time. Only a quarter of Americans meet recruitment standards that would qualify them to serve in the military without receiving a waiver.

We have seen time and again that DACA holders and Dreamers are ready and willing to serve America, to risk their lives for this country. But despite the success of veterans like Chieh, DACA holders can no longer enlist in the military, even though they went to school in the United States, pledged allegiance to our flag for decades, and know no other country.

During his first term, then-President Trump tried to shut down the DACA Program, but his effort was blocked by the Supreme Court.

On a personal note, the first time I ever met Donald Trump was just minutes after he had been sworn in as President of the United States for his first term. I had a chance at a luncheon to walk up and shake his hand and congratulate him and to ask a question. My question to him was: What are you going to do about the Dreamers? What about these kids who are here in the United States, brought here as children who want to be part of our future—what will you do about them, Mr. President?

He said: Don't worry. We'll take care of those kids.

Sadly, in the 4 years of the first term of President Trump, that didn't happen. The opposite did. Many efforts were made by his Department of Justice and other Agencies to stop the DACA Program and to stop any effort to create a Dreamers Program. That is a sad reality.

I urge my colleagues to meet with these Dreamers personally. That is all I ask. Whether you support DACA or support the Dream Act, meet with them and hear their stories. Understand that decisions were made by their family which may have violated the law, but they were kids at the time those decisions were made. They have proven with their own personal lives and commitment that they truly want to be part of the future of America.

Are we better served because this man decided to enlist in the military and protect our country? Of course. His return to Taiwan would be at the expense of the safety and security of the United States.

Dreamers like Chieh have earned the right to put down roots, start their families, further their education, and continue to contribute to America. It is time for Congress to do something on a bipartisan basis and pass the Dream Act. It is not only the right thing to do; it is long overdue.

NOMINATION OF AMIR H. ALI

Madam President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Amir Ali to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

Mr. Ali received his B.S.E. from the University of Waterloo and his J.D.,

magna cum laude, from Harvard Law School. He then served as a law clerk to Judge Raymond C. Fisher on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in Pasadena and Justice Marshall Rothstein on the Supreme Court of Canada in Ottawa.

Following his clerkships, Mr. Ali joined Jenner & Block LLP as a litigation associate in the firm's Washington, DC, office, where he focused on complex civil litigation, regulatory litigation, and appeals. Since 2017, he has worked for the Roderick & Solange MacArthur Justice Center in Washington, DC, where he currently serves as president and executive director. His practice at the firm has included civil and criminal litigation at all levels of Federal and State judiciaries, as well as work before Federal administrative Agencies. Notably, Mr. Ali has served as the lead counsel on merits briefing in four U.S. Supreme Court cases, and he has argued three of them.

In addition to his legal practice, Mr. Ali has directed Harvard Law School's Criminal Justice Appellate Clinic since 2019. He has also taught at the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law, Harvard Law School, and Georgetown University Law Center. His nomination has received support from groups and individuals from across a wide range of ideologies and backgrounds, and the American Bar Association rated him as "well qualified" to serve on the district court.

Mr. Ali's significant litigation experience in private practice and at a non-profit law firm makes him an outstanding nominee—and ensures that he will be a valuable addition to the district court. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting his nomination.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. I ask unanimous consent that the rollcall vote begin immediately.

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

VOTE ON ALI NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Ali nomination?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. Braun).