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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, inspire us today to give You our best. Help us to focus on serving You and bringing honor to Your Name.

Lord, guide our lawmakers in their challenging work. Open their minds and hearts to be ready to do Your bidding. Use them as instruments of Your purposes, shining Your light through them to dispel the shadows in our Nation and world. Help them to live to please You, demonstrating conclusively with actions that they follow You. Give them the wisdom to encourage and help each other in the important work of guarding our freedom.

We pray in Your magnificent Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Daniel Driscoll, of North Carolina, to be Secretary of the Army.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

ESTONIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today is Estonian Independence Day.

On this day in 1918, the Estonians declared their independence from the Russian Empire. They had to fight a war against both Germans and the Army of Soviet Russia to secure their independence in a treaty in 1920. In that treaty, Russia renounced any claim to Estonian territory and recognized the independence and sovereignty of Estonia forever. Forever lasted only 20 years because the Soviet Union illegally occupied Estonia as well as Latvia and Lithuania for the next 50 years. Ten percent of the population of the Baltic countries was deported or sent to labor camps.

The United States always saw the occupation of the Baltics as illegitimate and recognized their sovereignty throughout the entire Cold War. In the depths of the Cold War, it was hard to imagine that the Baltics would ever, ever regain their independence. Today, to the contrary, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are vibrant, prosperous, and free. Of course, that irritates Putin, the KGB dictator of Russia.

UKRAINE

Today, Mr. President, is also the 3-year anniversary of Russia's brutal, all-out invasion of Ukraine. Three years ago, Russian tanks were rolling toward Kyiv, and we all thought a total takeover of Ukraine by Russia was inevitable. As we know, instead, Ukrain-

ians, fighting for their homeland, stopped, then pushed back the Russians, taking back 50 percent of the territory the Russians initially occupied.

Today, Russia continues to gradually capture Ukrainian territory by force. With the help of North Korean soldiers, the Russian military is making small territorial gains but at an incredible cost in Russian lives and equipment. According to defense calculations, at the rate Russia is advancing in Ukraine today, it would take 83 years to reach Kyiv.

Three years ago, we thought Ukraine didn't stand a chance against the mighty Russian military. Everyone assumed Russia would conquer all of Ukraine and do it very quickly. Three years in, the Russian military can't even conquer the territories in the east of Ukraine that Putin claims to have already annexed. In the areas that Russia has occupied, churches have been closed and evangelicals persecuted for their faith. Civilians have been tortured, killed, and tossed into mass graves. Children have been kidnapped—at least 20,000—and are being brainwashed to forget who they are and to adopt a Russian identity, where they now live.

The Ukrainian people want peace desperately, and I hope it comes soon. The Ukrainian people want this peace because that is best for them as it is for the entire globe. But just like their Baltic friends before them, Ukrainians will never concede their sovereignty, and they will never give up on their countrymen who are currently under brutal occupation.

The question is, What will make KGB Putin give up his imperial dreams of reestablishing the Soviet Empire?

As we think about how we end this war in Ukraine, there is a lot going on right now. I don't think we want to forget that Putin has said very definitely, over the last 20 years in speeches, he wants to reestablish the Soviet Empire.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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I think this citizen of the United States, this Senator, ought to consider that sometimes we get driven by ideological waves in that we tend to think we have got all the answers. We can remember that there were a lot of conservative Republicans during the 1930s who thought Hitler was on the right track to bring peace to the world. Then we had a lot of liberals at that time, even through World War II, who thought that Joseph Stalin's murderous regime was the answer to all of our questions and all of the problems that this world had.

Now we have people who think Russia is somehow a good nation. They have institutionalized corruption in that country. They have murdered their political opponents. They imprison citizens for giving mild criticism to the country. They hold American citizens hostage—and hundreds of thousands of their people have been killed in this useless war.

Conservatives imagine that Russia doesn't exist today as I just described, so they are willing to sit down with people who have no political liberties, no political opposition. And it seems to me this is something that this Senator would not do.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, early Friday morning, the Senate passed a budget resolution to lay the groundwork for border, energy, and national security legislation. We considered a lot of amendments from my Democratic colleagues, not one of which, interestingly enough, was centered on border security and very few of which addressed either national security or energy security. But that was, I have to say, not terribly surprising. After all, the Democratic leader seemed to think, to the very end, that this budget resolution had something to do with tax cuts for billionaires, even though it has absolutely and exactly nothing to do with tax cuts of any kind. I am not sure if he was honestly confused or merely felt that he could achieve something messaging-wise by pretending this bill had something to do with billionaires.

But for the record, let me review what this bill was about. As everyone here knows, whether they want to acknowledge it or not, the chaos that President Biden allowed to rage at our southern border left a gaping hole in our national security. That is a hole that President Trump and Republicans are determined to close. And since day one of his administration, President

Trump has been fulfilling his campaign promise to crack down on illegal immigration and secure our border.

In addition to surging support to the southern border, his administration has been focused on arresting and deporting criminal aliens—from rapists and murderers to child sex predators and dangerous gang members—and they have made a lot of progress already.

But as the President's border czar made clear to Republican Senators 2 weeks ago, these efforts cannot continue without additional funding from Congress. So Republicans are moving forward on legislation to fund continued efforts to deport criminal aliens as well as provide other necessary resources to secure our border, discourage illegal immigration, and restore respect for the rule of law. That was what Friday's budget resolution was about.

And it is too bad that my Democratic colleagues aren't interested in joining us on border security legislation, but I will tell you, with or without Democrats, Republicans are moving full speed ahead. We owe the American people a secure border, and we intend to give it to them.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

VLADIMIR PUTIN

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, 3 years ago, Vladimir Putin brought war and destruction to the free people of Ukraine. Three years ago, a powerful, hungry autocrat broke the peace in Europe, violated the sovereignty of an independent democracy, and rolled tanks and weapons and troops across the Ukrainian borders without provocation or justification.

Vladimir Putin has sealed his place in history as an enemy to democracy, to freedom, and to peace. He has killed tens of thousands of innocent civilians. His rockets have destroyed homes and churches and schools and hospitals—deliberately, in many cases.

A year ago, I was there. I saw the destruction. I saw parking lots being turned into mass graves. I spoke with soldiers near the border trying to defend their homes. And I felt the deep resolve of the Ukrainian people. I felt the value of America's leadership and the international struggle to push back against Putin's evil aggression.

Today, we remember Bucha, we remember the atrocities in Mariupol, and we remember everywhere where Putin's horrors have touched. We honor the lives lost at the hands of Russia's war of aggression, and we will

not let Vladimir Putin and his thugs off the hook.

For 3 years, the United States has been clear on where we stand. We have stood on the side of democracy, the inviolability of borders, and the freedom of nations—and against Vladimir Putin.

We passed in this Chamber robust, bipartisan security assistance. The United States united the leaders of the West, and for years we succeeded in turning Putin into a pariah.

But today, on this third anniversary of Putin's war, Donald Trump is turning his back on the values that America stands for of democracy, of security, and of liberty. Instead of standing up to Putin, Donald Trump is siding with him and against our own allies. Instead of condemning Putin's lies, Donald Trump is parroting Russian misinformation and propaganda, in defiance of all evidence, without regard to any facts, and with utter contempt for the truth.

Today, President Trump met with President Macron. President Macron is advising Donald Trump not to show weakness—not to show weakness—to Putin at this pivotal moment. Donald Trump should heed President Macron's warning, or else Putin is going to eat his lunch, and America is going to suffer in the long term.

American support of a pro-Western democracy under attack is not charity. It is about our own long-term security. For Donald Trump to show weakness to Putin is to endanger America's security tomorrow.

If history tells us one thing about autocrats, it is that their hunger is never satiated. It is never enough. They will keep going one way or another until they are halted.

What are Poland and Latvia and Lithuania and Estonia supposed to think about Putin's belligerence next door to them? What is NATO supposed to make of Donald Trump's eagerness to deal with autocrats instead of our own allies?

If Donald Trump sells out democracy in Europe today, what will Donald Trump sell out tomorrow? Democracy in America? Our national security, which he is already starting to do?

The way Donald Trump is engaging with Vladimir Putin right now is not going to make America any safer in the long run. This all goes back to a pattern we have seen from Donald Trump from the very beginning. He has always admired autocrats, strongmen, and bullies; always shown contempt for the rule of law, for truth, for accountability, for facts—because his ultimate goal is to skew things in favor of the wealthy and corrupt few at the expense of everybody else.

Just like his push for taxes, just like his empowering DOGE, Donald Trump's modus operandi is to trample on safeguards and basic accountability—values central to any free democracy—in order to allow corrupt billionaires, the wealthy few, and cronies to fill in the void.