

Closure Commission suggested we had a 12-percent chance of keeping the base open. Some, at the time, were ready to write Ellsworth's obituary, knowing it would take a miracle to save the base. Some thought it would take a political deal, and they doubted that South Dakota had the clout to pull that off.

We knew we weren't going to save Ellsworth through politics, and we weren't going to wait around for a miracle. Instead, we did it the South Dakota way. We worked hard—harder than we ever had. There were just over 100 days from the announcement in May to the financial decision in August, and saving Ellsworth consumed that entire summer.

My staff and I called everyone we could think of. I am sure the BRAC Commission was tired of seeing me that summer, but I was determined to drive home the case for keeping Ellsworth open. We poured through reams of data to make that case.

It was a team effort. Bob Taylor, in my Washington office, and Qusi Al-Haj, in my Rapid City office, didn't see much of their families that summer. The rest of the South Dakota delegation was involved. Then-Governor MIKE ROUNDS was involved as well. Retired Air Force officers like Gen. John Michael Loh and Col. Pat McElgunn lent their voices and expertise to the cause. And countless local officials, community members, and, of course, the 11,000—11,000—South Dakotans who came to the BRAC hearing in Rapid City that June were all part of that team.

In the end, Ellsworth was not saved by miracles or politics. It was saved because we proved that Ellsworth was too valuable to close. Moving all the B-1s to another base was supposed to save money, but we proved that wouldn't actually be the case.

Plus, we demonstrated the Pentagon's analysis failed to account for a number of other factors. Consolidating the entire fleet of bombers in one place was a major vulnerability. An attack, extreme weather, or any issue at that base could ground the entire fleet of B-1s. And consolidation risked overwhelming maintenance and training capacity at that base.

It turned out that Ellsworth was just what the Air Force needed. That is the argument that we made. As Colonel McElgunn put it to the BRAC Commissioners, "Ellsworth has operational advantages to make it the ideal base for the 21st century." And as General Loh testified, "closing Ellsworth will deny the Pentagon a valuable base for future missions."

Ultimately, in August, the BRAC Commission agreed, and it voted 8 to 1 to keep Ellsworth open. And since then, those predictions have proven right. Ellsworth's B-1s have been a consistent asset to our national security.

In 2011, B-1s left Ellsworth to strike targets in Libya, marking the first time a B-1 fleet launched from the

United States to strike overseas targets.

Last year, Ellsworth B-1s conducted a CONUS-to-CONUS mission, taking a continuous 31-hour flight to the Indo-Pacific and back without landing.

And we have continued working to demonstrate Ellsworth's value and to ensure its future will never again be in jeopardy.

In 2007, the Air Force Financial Services Center arrived on base. In 2012, the 89th Attack Squadron came to Ellsworth to control MQ-9 Reaper drones from ground control stations in South Dakota.

In 2015, after a decade of work, we expanded the Powder River Training Complex, nearly quadrupling its size and making it the largest training airspace in the lower 48.

And in 2021, the Air Force announced that Ellsworth would officially be named the first operating base for the new B-21 Raider, a sixth-generation long-range strategic bomber.

From BRAC to B-21, and the story continues.

Madam President, 20 years ago, Ellsworth was said to be a liability. Today, it is very clear that it is a national security asset, and I am working to make sure the base and the surrounding community have what they need to continue to play a key role in our national defense for generations to come.

NOMINATION OF TROY MEINK

Madam President, before I close, I want to speak briefly about Troy Meink, a native South Dakotan, whose nomination to be Air Force Secretary will be considered this week.

Dr. Meink grew up in Lemmon, SD. He graduated South Dakota State University on an ROTC scholarship and met his wife Jean during their time in Brookings.

His service encompasses the breadth of the Air Force's mission. He began his career as a navigator and instructor on a KC-135 crew. He flew 100 flights during the first Gulf war, including 8 combat missions. In the Air Force Reserve, he was the lead test engineer for ballistic test missiles.

Then, in 2013, he became the Deputy Under Secretary for Space. In 2020, he was appointed the Principal Deputy Director of the National Reconnaissance Office.

And in all his spare time, he has coached his kids' competitive robotics teams.

Madam President, Troy Meink is someone who has the experience to lead the Air Force into the next frontier, and I look forward to seeing him take the Air Force to even greater heights once he is confirmed to this position.

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. 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.

QATAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, news of the Qatari Government gifting Donald Trump a \$4 million private jet to use as Air Force One is so corrupt that even Putin would give a double take.

This is not just naked corruption. It is also a grave national security threat.

So in light of the deeply troubling news of a possible Qatari-funded Air Force One and the reports that the Attorney General personally signed off on this clearly unethical deal, I am announcing a hold on all DOJ political nominees until we get more answers.

Here are some questions that must be answered. First, I call on the DOJ's Foreign Agent Registration Act Unit, or the FARA Unit, to do its job and disclose all activities by Qatari foreign agents inside the United States that could benefit President Trump or the Trump Organization.

Since Attorney General Bondi took charge, the Department of Justice has not been doing its job when it comes to FARA. The FARA unit needs to enforce the law and inform the public of all activities, not just on this luxury plane deal but all deals involving foreign countries in the Middle East and President Trump, his family, and the Trump Organization.

Second, with regard to this half-a-billion-dollar private jet deal, the American people deserve to know the facts. President Trump has told the American people this is a "free jet." Does that mean the Qataris are delivering a ready-on-day-one plane with all the security measures already built in?

If so, who installed those security measures, and how do we know they were properly installed? Why would we take the risk of trusting any foreign country to do this sensitive work?

If not, what security modifications would be needed to ensure a foreign-sourced Air Force One is safe to use?

If this is, as President Trump promised, a "free jet," will the Qataris pay for those highly sensitive installations, or will the American taxpayers cover the cost?

How much will those modifications cost American taxpayers? Hundreds of millions of dollars? Billions of dollars? How much will they cost?

If the American taxpayers are forced to pay for this temporary plane, does it mean the U.S. Government will cancel the contract for the future Boeing plane?

If so, how much will that cancellation cost? And if not, why are American taxpayers being asked to spend hundreds of millions of dollars or more on a plane that will only be used for a year or two?

Additionally, who in the Trump administration was responsible for this crooked deal? What are the parameters

of this deal? And which country brought it up first—us or them? What is Qatar being offered in return?

Considering past security disasters, such as the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, what are the security risks of this arrangement?

And, finally, how is this gift not naked corruption?

The Attorney General must testify before both the House and Senate to explain why gifting Donald Trump a private jet does not violate the emoluments clause, which requires congressional approval, or any other ethics law.

So until the Attorney General explains her blatantly inept decision and we get complete and comprehensive answers to these and other questions, I will place a hold on all political nominees to the Department of Justice.

As disturbing as this latest news about the Qatari Air Force One is, it is frankly just the tip of the iceberg.

For months, Qatari and other Gulf State nationals have spent billions on deals with the Trump organizations, seemingly to buy access to the President, including \$2 billion from the UAE venture capital firm for Donald Trump's new stablecoin, including the launch of a new Trump hotel in Dubai worth over a billion dollars and the construction of a beachside golf course in Qatar, potentially worth \$5 billion.

Donald Trump's business deals in the Middle East reek of crooked self-enrichment. He isn't just blurring the line between public service and personal profit, he is erasing it. This isn't speculation; it is fact backed by overwhelming evidence. He is jeopardizing America's national security to line his own pockets.

What is most chilling about this brazen bribe and the national security betrayal is how openly Donald Trump is doing it, how he is lying about the need for this aircraft and the risks involved and how he is daring Republicans to call him out.

And how are Republicans responding? With silence. With their heads in the sand. Total obeisance. Afraid to tell the "emperor" he has no clothes.

Well, Republicans may be too scared to stand up to Donald Trump, but I will keep pushing and Senate Democrats will keep pushing to get more answers to this nakedly crooked arrangement with Qatar. Until the American people learn the truth about this deal, I will do my part to block the galling and truly breathtaking politicization at the Department of Justice.

TARIFFS

Madam President, now on tariffs, Donald Trump promised in dealing with China he would not back off without getting concessions in return. And then yesterday Donald Trump did, in fact, cave to China without getting much in the way of any concessions. Sadly, it seems like China has, once again, gotten the better of Donald Trump, and that is bad news for American workers, American consumers, American manufacturing.

I have long been clear that going after China is a good thing; going after the Chinese Government when they are unfair on trade is a good thing. I have been clear that tariffs, when used carefully and as part of a larger strategy, can help bring nations like those run by the Chinese Communist Party to heel.

But that is not what happened under Donald Trump. Instead Donald Trump announced "Liberation Day"—pushing us to the brink of recession, sent markets flailing, sent consumers and small businesses into a panic, all so he could cave to China without having anything to show for the heartache and economic detritus.

This has all been another example of Donald Trump's chaos. Chaos. That is a watchword, unfortunately, for the way this administration acts. He has one policy for his tariffs one day, a different policy the next day. One day he is pretending to play a tough guy with China. The next, he is caving to China and getting little, if anything, in return. Who knows what Trump's tariff policy will be in the next 90 days. No business can count on what he might say or do, and any promise that he will stick to his word, stick to his policies, well, the past is prologue; that never happens.

Donald Trump's announcement with China is cold comfort for consumers and small businesses alike for one reason: We don't know what he will do next.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Madam President, on reconciliation and particularly on SNAP, a program that feeds hungry children, today, the House Committees on Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, and Agriculture will begin marking up the main portions of Republicans' so-called "big, beautiful bill."

Reports suggest that Republicans may even name their legislation "One Beautiful Bill." That is ridiculous. I suggest Republicans pick a different name, a more honest name. They should call their bill "The Big GRIFT" because that is what their bill is: Greedy Republicans in Favor of Tycoons. "The Big GRIFT: Billionaires win, American families lose."

There is nothing—nothing—"beautiful" about the biggest cuts to Medicaid in American history. There is nothing "beautiful" about cutting SNAP, the largest anti-hunger program in America, by over \$300 billion.

There is nothing "beautiful" about forcing kids to go hungry just to feed corporate greed. But that is what Republicans want to do. They want to ax SNAP benefits by \$310 billion to pay for tax breaks for the ultrarich. Cutting food from the mouth of hungry children for tax breaks for the ultrarich, that is what they call beautiful? I call it warped.

They want to shift the burden to the States, knowing full well many States won't be able to make up the gap in funding. That means in States across

America and in Puerto Rico, kids, seniors, veterans, and families will go hungry. USDA cuts have already decimated food banks.

I was just in Albany yesterday where the local food bank had 27 tractor-trailers, 1 million pounds of food, 1 million pounds of good, nutritious food for children and others—veterans, elderly—who need the food, all canceled because of Donald Trump's cuts.

Much of that food was produced by local family farms that lost a valuable market, and this is happening across the country. And now Republicans want to add to the devastation by cutting SNAP. That is an even further cut than they have already done, a deeper cut. Republicans call their SNAP cuts "savings" and "reducing waste," but those are euphemisms. What it really means is increasing hunger, increasing poverty, increasing the wealth of the ultrarich. It is morally indefensible. Indefensible.

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

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

The Senator from Wyoming.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, this week, Senator KAINE of Virginia and Senator VAN HOLLEN of Maryland are going to force a vote on a resolution here in the Senate, and, astonishingly, it is in defense of illegal immigrant criminals.

They are going to take up the Senate's time, the time of the American people, because they want to defend illegal immigrant criminals. It is called the Kaine-Van Hollen resolution, pure political theater. It is not about human rights. It is not about protecting Americans, in my opinion, from violent crime, and that is why I am opposing what they are proposing here today.

What they are proposing is to shield illegal immigrant criminals—shield them from deportation and shield them as they try to evade arrest.

Democrats want to defend illegal immigrant criminals, and apparently they want to continue to do that. Let's talk about illegal immigrant criminals, and let's talk about the one that they are running to check on in El Salvador: Kilmar Abrego Garcia.

That is what one of them did, went to go check on him. The media likes to call him a "Maryland man." Senator VAN HOLLEN said he doesn't "vouch" for Garcia. Yet he is one of many Democrats now who have gone to El Salvador.

Let's talk about Garcia's record. That is what the American people have been hearing about as well. For starters, Garcia is an illegal immigrant with a deportation order. He has been