

LOS ANGELES PROTESTS

Mr. President, I have said this over and over in the Senate Judiciary Committee, and I will say it here: I condemn violence and vandalism, including violence against law enforcement. There is no place in legitimate protest for that to occur. What is happening in Los Angeles has been brought to my attention over the weekend and is something we need to address. However, addressing it effectively means not grandstanding but giving law enforcement the resources they need to control the situation.

Neither the Governor of California nor the mayor of Los Angeles asked for the National Guard troops that President Trump sent in. Governor Newsom said the decision to deploy the National Guard without appropriate training or orders risks seriously escalating the situation.

What is clear is that President Trump manipulated these protests as an excuse to politicize the military and divert resources from pressing national security and disaster relief responsibilities.

At the end of last week, a police-woman in Chicago was gunned down in the middle of the night. It happened several years ago with an officer named Ella French. I came to know her family and her mother, and I came to learn and respect what a wonderful young woman she was. She gave her life as a Chicago policewoman. Another police-woman lost her life at the end of last week.

What are we going to do to stop violence in the streets of this country? Certainly, devoting more and more law enforcement resources and people to amass the migration of people out of this country is not the highest priority. If there is a dangerous person, we should never let him in. If they commit crimes that are serious while they are here, we should throw them out, period—no ifs, ands, or buts. But looking at what is going on in Los Angeles, it doesn't serve that purpose. It creates fear and chaos to further a divisive agenda, with little in positive consequences.

The last time a President sent in the National Guard for a domestic operation without the request from the State's Governor was during the L.B.J. administration in the 1960s. President Johnson did it in 1965 to protect civil rights demonstrators in Alabama.

This weekend, the President wrote on social media that Los Angeles was "invaded and occupied" by "violent, insurrectionist mobs" and directed three of his top Cabinet officials to take any actions necessary to "liberate [LA] from the Migrant Invasion."

His FBI Director Kash Patel also wrote on X:

Hit a cop, you're going to jail. Doesn't matter where you came from or how you got here or what movement speaks to you.

Interesting. Kash Patel, the head of the FBI, is also the choral director of the January 6 defendants who raided

this Capitol, those who beat the hell out of cops who were protecting my life and others and put many of them at risk of serious medical injury. Some of them ultimately died from the experience.

It seems President Trump and Mr. Patel forgot what happened on January 6 in the U.S. Capitol when a violent mob, summoned by a bitter, defeated former President, ransacked the Capitol Complex. You may remember seeing the scenes, Mr. President. The insurrectionist mob, the rioters, came into the Capitol on January 6 and looked through my desk. You could see it on C-SPAN. They sat in the Acting President pro tempore's chair, gaping away as they considered themselves the real patriots in America.

On the first day back in office—the first day back in office—in his second term, what did President Trump do to these cop haters? He issued a blanket pardon for over 1,500 of them—to release them—despite their convictions. They had been convicted for that riot that took place in this building, including those who violently assaulted law enforcement officers. It appears FBI Director Patel's comment of "Hit a cop, you're going to jail" only applies to people President Trump doesn't agree with.

On Wednesday, we will hear from Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth in the Senate Appropriations subcommittee. I hope he is prepared to address this inflammatory deployment of the National Guard.

Violence is never acceptable. We shouldn't be making grandstanding moves of diluting the real impact that is needed from good law enforcement.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BRITT). Without objection, it is so ordered.

AIR FORCE ONE

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, the U.S. Constitution and the American people give the American President vast power: the power to decide how billions of dollars are spent; the power to oversee the entire Federal criminal justice system; the power to sell arms around the world, to deploy millions of American soldiers, to negotiate peace treaties.

We give him these powers—the Constitution gives the President these powers—so that he uses them on our behalf, to deploy that vast power of the American Presidency to increase our quality of life, to protect the American people. We place immense trust in the President not to abuse these incredible authorities that are given to him.

But Donald Trump is abusing that authority in ways that, honestly,

shock the conscience. Donald Trump is using the power of his office not to help or protect us but to enrich himself and his family. He is doing it publicly, brazenly, out in the open. He is, in effect, daring us—specifically, daring the legislative branch, the coequal branch—to stop him.

Nearly 3 weeks ago, news broke that the White House had dialed up one of our key allies in the Middle East, the Government of Qatar, and it asked that the Qataris give the President a luxury jet that is reportedly worth upward of \$400 million.

Now, the nicest jet that I have ever been on is Air Force One, and it is really nice. But the jet that Trump wants to make Air Force One—that he is asking for from the Qataris—makes Air Force One, the current version, look like a tenement house. The Qatari jet that he is asking for, its interior is designed by a famed French designer, complete with a flowing grand staircase, sculpted ceilings, plush carpeting, leather couches, and gold furnishings. The plane has been called the world's most luxurious private jet. It includes nine bathrooms, five kitchens, swanky lounges, and a master bedroom suite.

The arrangement that Trump proposed to the Qataris would briefly pass the jet through U.S. Government hands—but only, as reported, for just a year or two—before it would end up belonging personally to Donald Trump. The U.S. Government would essentially be a straw purchaser. The real owner of the jet, for all practical purposes, would be Donald Trump.

Now, this kind of gift, a \$400 million luxury jet, has no precedent in American history. No President has ever asked for—never mind been given—a \$400 million gift from a foreign nation. Why? Well, because Presidents know that that is crossing a line; that is a massive abuse of their power.

The leverage that Presidents have over other countries that they could use to ask for millions of dollars in gifts, it is supposed to be used to benefit the Nation's security, not to enrich themselves. But, also, it is just illegal. There is a very specific clause in the Constitution that forbids this kind of gift from a foreign government to a President, and this body is supposed to be in charge of helping to enforce the Constitution. Our Founders wrote that clause into the Constitution because they worried about this exact situation, where a President is using his authority, like a Monarch or a King, to make himself the richest person in the world.

Now, the Qatari Government feels like it had little choice but to say yes when asked for this \$400 million gift—again, briefly to the U.S. Government but really, for all practical purposes, to the President. They felt like they had no choice precisely because an American President has so much power; they have so much leverage, especially over a vulnerable country in the Middle East.

In this case, Qatar really needs to keep the United States on its side. Middle East politics, they shift really quickly, and during Trump's first term, when the Qataris were not close to Trump, they paid a price. They found themselves badly and dangerously isolated in the region. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, if you remember, effectively ganged up to blockade Qatar, and Trump gave that move implicit consent.

So Qatar, frankly, is willing to pay a very high price to avoid that fate again. But Qatar also has things that it wants from the United States. No Middle East country has ever been allowed to buy MQ-9 Reaper drones. These are the most lethal armed drones that America makes. We have previously judged that the region is just too volatile to allow any nation to possess the Reaper, and, arguably, there is an arms controls regime that doesn't allow us to transfer that technology.

But Qatar wanted to break that precedent. Of course, they did. They wanted to be the first nation to have the Reaper technology, and Trump seemed willing to go along. So a \$400 million gift to the President—again, that the President was asking for—is a relatively small price to pay for that kind of military edge over your rivals in the region.

But there was one more reason that Qatar had no choice but to give Trump—or, at least, they felt they had no choice but to give Trump—this wildly illegal gift: because Trump had made it clear to the whole region, to the whole of the Gulf region in the Middle East, that he was for sale and that preferential American treatment was for sale and that if Qatar didn't pay, another country would.

Qatar wasn't going to be protected, frankly, by a collective refusal of Trump's extortion in the region, and they had only to look next door to the United Arab Emirates to see how high the price was getting to win Trump's affection. At the exact moment that Trump was leaning on Qatar to give him the luxury plane, he was also leaning on UAE to give him not a \$400 million gift but a \$2 billion gift.

And he didn't have to lean hard. Just before the Qataris committed to give Trump the plane, an investment firm backed by the Emirati Government and chaired by the Emirati Government's National Security Advisor shocked the world and announced that it would use Trump's brand new stablecoin—this is a form of cryptocurrency—in a \$2 billion investment deal that this investment fund, essentially an arm of the UAE Government, was doing. And because of that \$2 billion deal, overnight Trump's stablecoin became one of the five largest stablecoins in the world—massively inflating the President's wealth due to this one single investment.

Now, this wasn't an ordinary investment decision. Out of all of the stablecoin companies in the world, the

Emiratis chose what, at the time, was a brandnew, relatively small crypto company run by two people who had very little background in the industry. Why? To put money directly into the pocket of Donald Trump.

On the website of World Liberty Financial—that is the company that is issuing the Trump coin—they don't hide the fact that this isn't the Trump kids that own the business.

On the website it states, 60 percent of this company, World Liberty Financial, is owned by an entity affiliated with Donald J. Trump.

But it gets even more corrupt because World Liberty Financial's other cofounder is a guy named Zach Witkoff, who, not coincidentally, is the son of Steve Witkoff, Trump's top Middle East adviser. The Trumps could have picked anybody in the world to run his stablecoin business with, but they chose the son of the Middle East envoy just so that when they were going around asking for money in the region, it was crystal clear that if you were doing business with World Liberty Financial, you were doing business with the people in the Trump administration who make all the decisions about the Middle East.

So in one fell swoop, the Emiratis can put money into the family that controls the White House and the family that deploys and decides Middle East policy.

Now, just like the Qataris, the Emiratis want something in return too. Their ask was for the United States to remove restrictions on selling the most advanced American-made computer chips to the UAE. The restrictions have been in place under Republican and Democratic administrations for a really good reason: The UAE has a very close—too close—relationship with China, and the United States has always, rightly, worried that if we gave advanced technology to UAE, it would pretty quickly potentially fall into the hands of the Chinese. Now, this would be very bad, especially regarding these microchips—these computer chips—because these chips power the most advanced and proprietary American AI systems. Losing these chips to China could cost us the lead to China on the global AI race.

The UAE also wanted the United States to look the other way while they helped fund a death-spiral civil war in Sudan. The UAE is the main supplier of weapons to the worst of the two parties that are involved in the brutal, catastrophic, deadly civil war in Sudan.

And they want the United States to keep giving them weapons—most recently asking for a resupply of Chinook helicopters, even as they use their military prowess to destroy Sudan.

The end of this chapter of the story will not shock you. In coordination with the \$400 million luxury plane and the \$2 billion investment in Trump crypto, Qatar got signoff on buying the Reaper drones, and Steve Witkoff—fa-

ther of the co-owner of World Liberty Financial—marched over to UAE right before the President was showing up himself and announced that the United States would, in fact, magically, lift those restrictions on the microchips. And just as unsurprisingly, Trump announced he will sell the Chinooks to Abu Dhabi, with no requirement that they stop fueling the war in Sudan.

The blatant exchange of U.S. national security secrets, our most sensitive drone technology, and our most sensitive chip technology in exchange for cash into Donald Trump's pocket is perhaps the most brazenly corrupt act in the history of the American Presidency, and we cannot normalize it just because he is doing it out in the open in public.

The Senate—the Senate—which is given the responsibility by the Constitution to be a coequal branch with the President—we have independent responsibility to uphold and protect the Constitution to set American foreign policy. We cannot pretend this is not happening. We cannot look the other way while the entire moral foundation of our foreign policy is being shattered.

Republicans can't ignore this just because the President is their party's leader. We have that independent obligation to protect the Constitution, which clearly says that these gifts are illegal, whether they are going to a Democratic President or a Republican President.

We have a responsibility to our taxpayers to stop a President from immorally enriching himself using the power we give him to help himself instead of helping us.

What makes this moment so dangerous is that both UAE and Qatar—especially Qatar—are key partners of the United States. They aren't our adversaries. They are our allies. They are imperfect allies, but they are our allies.

In fact, I have been down on this floor in the past arguing on behalf of Qatar and the United States-Qatar relationship when other Senators have tried to denigrate the Qataris' contributions to regional peace. The Qataris have been a critical partner on so many important issues. It is worth saying that.

There is no way that we would have been able to evacuate 124,000 people from Afghanistan on the eve of the Taliban takeover without Qatar's help. The Qataris today host thousands of U.S. troops at Al Udeid Air Force Base, the largest base in the region.

The Qataris are critical mediators who have helped us send back-channel messages to secure the release of American hostages or negotiate peace deals. There is no question that Qatar is a country that helps stabilize the region and often is indispensable in protecting U.S. interests overseas.

So I want to cultivate and strengthen that important relationship. I honor the work the United States and the UAE do all around the region to try to

track down and hold accountable terrorists. These are real partnerships.

But our relationship with Qatar and the UAE, it can't be a corrupt relationship. We can't sell drones to Qatar—our friend—if our friend is willing to take part in Trump's corruption. We cannot sell weapons to the UAE—our ally—if our ally is willing to take part in Trump's corruption.

We will have a chance this week to make this clear; that the U.S. Senate will not facilitate—will not grease the wheels of Trump's corruption of our foreign policy.

We can do that by voting to block these two arms sales to Qatar and to the UAE—not permanently but until both countries commit to deny Trump's requests for personal enrichment as part of the bilateral relationship.

That is why Senators VAN HOLLEN, KAINE, SCHATZ, and SANDERS have joined me in two resolutions of disapproval for those Reaper drone sales and the Chinook sale, and we will have a vote on these two resolutions as early as this week.

President Trump has declared that U.S. foreign policy is for sale, and the opening bids from two of the richest nations in the world is a \$2 billion investment in Trump's crypto company from the UAE and a \$400 million luxury plane essentially for the President's permanent personal use.

At the exact same moment that Trump is trying to push a bill through this Congress that is going to ruin a lot of people's lives—cutting off their healthcare or leaving kids without food at night—he is making himself even richer by trading American national security policy for gifts and, to make it worse, trading away U.S. national security secrets in exchange.

The net result is an American public that is poorer and weaker and less secure and a President who is richer. It is corrupt. It is corrupt. We have never ever in the history of this country allowed for a President to do this. Never in the 250 years that our Republic has been on the Earth has a President ever asked another nation to enrich himself in this way in exchange for preferential treatment from the U.S. taxpayers.

If you are Republican or Democratic Senator, you have to see this as unprecedented, as terrible for our Nation, as corruption. American foreign policy should not be for sale. If we let these arms sales go through, we are greasing the wheels of that corruption. If we vote for these resolutions of disapproval, at least we have a shot to stop it.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NOMINATION OF DAVID FOTOUHI

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I will say that I am here today because we are about to go to the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of David Fotouhi to serve as the Deputy Administrator of the Environ-

mental Protection Agency, and I very much hope that colleagues will oppose his nomination because he is, essentially, 100 percent on the side of the polluters and not interested in protecting the public health or the public safety or the public's well-being.

If you think about the EPA at its most basic, its mission is to protect clean air and clean water and a safe climate. But in this guy's two jobs since law school, as a corporate lawyer and as acting general counsel of the EPA during the first Trump administration, Mr. Fotouhi has served the interests of polluting industries that do everything in their power to avoid, weaken, or kill the rules that protect our clean air, our clean water, and our safe climate. He has consistently been on the wrong side.

As a partner at a prominent law firm Mr. Fotouhi defended a raft of big polluting interests, including megapolluters Chevron and Sunoco. Now, that is just the tip of the iceberg. Other polluter clients included Aethon Energy, Cibolo Energy Partners, Energy Transfer Partners, Matador Resources Company, and ProFrac Holding.

What did he help them do? Well, he defended one company for dumping tens of thousands of tons of PFAS into drinking water. He defended tire manufacturers for poisoning salmon with their rubber additives. He defended an automobile company against claims of greenwashing concerning their so-called clean diesel cars. He defended another for failing to obtain proper permits, resulting in illegal emissions of sulfur dioxide. And he represented a major defense contractor seeking to shift responsibility onto the United States for environmental remediation necessitated by the company's release of hazardous waste. The list goes on.

As counsel and then acting general counsel at EPA during the first Trump administration, Mr. Fotouhi worked hard to repeal environmental regulations meant to protect human health and the environment by doing two primary things: First, he developed the legal justifications for these attacks; and, second, when they were challenged in court, he orchestrated the strategy to defend against those legal challenges.

Well, which regulations were involved? Actually, a lot of them: rules covering CO₂ emission standards for light-duty vehicles, greenhouse gas emissions from aircraft, methane emissions from the oil and gas industry, lead and copper in drinking water, State water quality certification processes, and the management of coal combustion residuals. In other words, lots and lots of rules meant to make our air, water, and climate cleaner and safer became the targets of this individual.

Now, Mr. Fotouhi is nominated to be second in command as the Agency implements the poisonous agenda of President Trump's fossil fuel donors.

Chief on those polluting donors wish list is the rescission of EPA's "endangerment finding," a 2009 science-based determination that greenhouse gases are harmful to human health and the environment.

Yes, that was 2009, and when that rule was adopted, it had been settled scientific fact for decades that greenhouse gases harm public health and the environment.

Now, here we are, 16 years later, where the evidence has only gotten stronger, and the looming economic dangers have only gotten more evident, and, yet, he wants to undo that rule. The only people who benefit from repealing the endangerment finding—the only people—are the planet's biggest polluters, who just happen to be among Trump and the Republican Party's biggest donors.

Mr. Fotouhi has served those polluters' interests for years. He is their boy.

Clearly, like everyone, polluters have a right to counsel. But it remains difficult for me to understand how someone who has made a career representing the very industries that destroy our environment, defending their practices that did that damage, now has any business being entrusted to protect us. He will obviously serve their interests and not the public interests. Always has, always will. Even before Mr. Fotouhi's nomination, the corruption of EPA by Trump's polluting fossil fuel donors is already underway.

Where even to begin?

Administrator Zeldin continues his assault on clean air and clean water at what he now contemptuously calls the climate religion, contrary to his repeated and obviously false and empty promises when he came before us in committee.

The list of congressionally authorized and appropriated funding that EPA continues illegally to hold hostage is too long to list here today. Obviously, the biggest target is the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, which drives Administrator Zeldin and his enablers at DOJ crazy, and it drives them to conduct that merits both legal and professional liability. I have talked about this frequently as it relates to the repeated misconduct of the unconfirmably corrupt Ed Martin over at DOJ, who is part of this scheme.

Beyond illegally blocking grants, this EPA has put the Office of Research and Development—responsible for conducting EPA's scientific research—on the chopping block with RIFs, reductions in force, and reorganizations imminent because, after all, who wants science where big polluting donors' interests are involved?

Then we have the coming onslaught of deregulatory actions, which will make cars dirtier and less fuel-efficient and more expensive for their owners to run so that Trump's big donors in the oil industry can sell more gasoline; deregulatory actions, which will let power plants and oil and gas facilities