

Hamas's military capabilities had largely been destroyed. Several noted Israeli leaders tried, including Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and Director of the Israeli Security Agency Ronen Bar—both of whom were fired by Netanyahu.

Let me be clear. Continuing this war with no discernible end is not in Israel's national security interest, and a lack of a viable plan and the humanitarian fiasco have been glaring mistakes—getting worse by the day.

Last week, Senators REED, SHAHEEN, WARNER, COONS, SCHATZ, and I called for a drastic change of course in Gaza, including an end to the fighting, return of the hostages, a dramatic increase in humanitarian aid, and a viable path toward a two-state solution that brings in regional powers to help manage and rebuild Gaza.

You cannot watch these scenes on television of these children emaciated because of their starvation and other children begging with pans for just a little bit of food to survive and believe this is the right course of action. It has to end. The humanitarian aid has to start immediately. It is within Israel's capabilities to do that. There is no excuse if they don't.

There was some welcome news this weekend about reopened aid corridors, but the larger urgent steps just can't wait any longer. I know the dilemma. I believe I know the dilemma that Israel faces with the attacks on October 7 on Israelis. I saw the videotape. Hamas was outrageous in their conduct in this invasion of Israel. But it has reached a point now where Israel has to show some leadership.

I don't know what Prime Minister Netanyahu is waiting for, but if he witnessed what we do in the United States from organizations across the world begging us to do something, to join them in stopping this humanitarian disaster, perhaps his heart will soften somewhat. We have to, in the United States, show real leadership.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of David Wright, of South Carolina, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years expiring June 30, 2030. (Reappointment).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NOMINATION OF DAVID WRIGHT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I am here to speak to the nomination of David Wright to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and to express my opposition. Not only will I be casting my vote against the nomination of Mr. Wright, but I truly urge all of my colleagues, Republican and Democrat alike, to do the same, at least until things settle down at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

At his hearing, I had intended to vote for Mr. Wright and to support a speedy confirmation through the Senate. But things started going haywire at the NRC. Mr. Wright has the qualifications to serve on that Agency and assured us that he wanted to bring expertise, competence, and independence to the Agency—or I should say, protect the expertise, competence, and independence of that Agency.

The background here is that Congress created the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to be an independent Agency to regulate nuclear facilities and materials. And when Congress did that, we deliberately separated it from the Department of Energy, and we have protected, for years, that as an important firewall.

Well, where are we now? The DOGE boys and the Department of Energy are infiltrating the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, compromising its integrity, its competence, and its mission. If you support expanding America's nuclear energy, this situation should alarm you. Even now, right now as I speak here, conditions aren't getting better at the NRC. After we pointed this out, they are still deteriorating.

While Mr. Wright committed to Congress that he would promote NRC's full authority and retain qualified staff and fulfill the Agency's commitment to the safe use of nuclear energy, that is not what we are seeing. What we are seeing is a DOGE-DOE detailee who has entered the top ranks over at the Agency without any Nuclear Regulatory Commission supervision. He is just planted over there, reporting to who knows who but, presumably, the Energy Secretary who is supposed to be on the other side of that firewall.

This DOGE-DOE detailee has been up to some bad business over there. He has been pushing out the Agency's top experts. Expertise in nuclear science and nuclear safety is a pretty precious commodity. People who worked there for years—for decades—are being shoved out. He has been pursuing reductions in force when, at this moment, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission needs more staff and help than ever.

And he has been pulling tricks like sidelining the general counsel over there to put her out of the equation—she, who must be approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission—and slip in a DOGE- and Department of Energy-driven, so-called chief counsel who the NRC hasn't approved and doesn't have to approve.

So the way we set it up was the Commission would pick its counsel, would have to approve it. And that person is being sidelined—the woman is being sidelined—so this other character can come in a slightly different role that doesn't require the approval of the Commission and just elbow her out. This guy is a fossil fuel lawyer. He doesn't know anything about nuclear energy except that it competes with fossil fuel. There is no good reason for that shift and a lot of bad reasons.

So my suspicions are up. All of this interference is threatening the NRC's independence and credibility at a time when the NRC's independence and credibility matters so much as we try to meet our unprecedented new demand for nuclear power.

I say this as a longtime champion of nuclear reform. I have been the top Democrat—the lead Democrat—on all of the nuclear reform bills that we have passed. It started with the Innovation Act with Senator CRAPO. We went on to the Innovation and Modernization Act with Senator BARRASSO and, most recently, the ADVANCE Act with Senator CAPITO.

I have put a fair amount of my credibility on the line because I believe that there is a new renaissance possible with nuclear power because of the small modular reactors and the safety components that can be done when you are building the same thing repeatedly and can test and test for safety; and the next-gen nuclear power that can be far safer than the older stuff and, if done right, could even burn through the nuclear waste stockpile, for which we have no other use, to provide a value power, clean power out of what is now a liability—nuclear waste.

We really do have a huge opportunity in this industry. The industry is responding. People are hiring. People are going back to school. This is really happening, and I want it to happen. I want it to succeed.

So it is really dumb for the Trump administration to be recklessly interfering with the NRC right now. It ought to be as offensive to Senator CAPITO, Senator CRAPO, Senator BARRASSO as it is to me. Supporting America's nuclear industry has been a bipartisan project, and it is working. The NRC has moved. It has changed. These new projects are moving forward, the small modulars and the next gen. Things are happening over there.

It is not like they have fouled it up and now deserve to be taken over by DOGE characters—who don't know anything about nuclear power—and by the Department of Energy. We are busting a thing that is working by doing this, and it doesn't seem to be a sensible plan other than the Department of Energy would like something else to run, even though they are supposed to be a firewall, and the DOGE people want stuff to wreck. But the DOE wanting something to run and DOGE wanting something to wreck is not a justification.

So to send a signal, I will be voting against Mr. Wright. And if—if, if, if—we could get a few votes to actually stop this nomination—not for long; just long enough to send a signal to the Department of Energy: Hands off the NRC; you are not supposed to cross that firewall, and the NRC itself: Hey, wake up; stand up and get those DOGE folks out of your shop, and to the nuclear industry, a burgeoning industry right now: Hey, defend the regulator upon whose credibility you depend,

then I think we could make some real progress.

So this is not just an angry shout against an incompetent nominee. I have done that. This is trying to protect an important Agency because it is essential to accomplishing a key bipartisan goal to renew America's nuclear industry safely and productively.

With that, I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 273, David Wright, of South Carolina, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years expiring June 30, 2030. (Reappointment)

John Thune, David McCormick, Tom Cotton, Thom Tillis, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Mike Rounds, Steve Daines, Eric Schmitt, Roger Marshall, Ron Johnson, Kevin Cramer, Jim Banks, Dan Sullivan, Pete Ricketts, Rick Scott of Florida, Ted Budd, Jim Justice.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of David Wright, of South Carolina, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years expiring June 30, 2030 (Reappointment), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 438 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Banks	Graham	Moran
Barrasso	Grassley	Moreno
Blackburn	Hagerty	Mullin
Boozman	Hawley	Paul
Britt	Hoeven	Ricketts
Budd	Husted	Risch
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Collins	Johnson	Schmitt
Cornyn	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cramer	Lankford	Sheehy
Crapo	Lee	Sullivan
Cruz	Lummis	Thune
Curtis	Marshall	Tillis
Daines	McConnell	Tuberville
Ernst	McCormick	Wicker
Fischer	Moody	Young

NAYS—45

Alsobrooks	Heinrich	Peters
Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Reed
Bennet	Hirono	Rosen
Blumenthal	Kaine	Sanders
Blunt Rochester	Kelly	Schatz
Booker	Kim	Schiff
Cantwell	King	Schumer
Coons	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cortez Masto	Lujan	Slotkin
Duckworth	Markey	Smith
Durbin	Merkley	Van Hollen
Fetterman	Murphy	Warner
Gallego	Murray	Warnock
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Hassan	Padilla	Wyden

NOT VOTING—4

Cassidy	Warren	Welch
Murkowski		

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHMITT). On this vote, the yeas are 51, and the nays are 45. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

TELECOM CYBERSECURITY TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, for several years now, I have urged the release of an unclassified report by independent cybersecurity experts that is titled “U.S. Telecommunications Insecurity 2022.”

Congress and the American people deserve to be able to read this report. And I may be the only Senator who has read this report. This report contains shocking details—let me repeat that—shocking details about national security threats to our country's phone system that require immediate action.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency permitted my staff to read the report at their office, and this was done in 2023. However, they have marked this unclassified report “For Official Use Only” and have refused to provide copies of the report to Congress or to make it public in response to Freedom of Information Act requests.

So I asked then-Director Easterly to release the report. When she didn't act on my request, I wrote to President Biden—that was in February of 2024—urging him to address the serious national security threat posed by foreign governments exploiting U.S. phone carriers' weak cybersecurity. The Biden administration took no action.

CISA's top telecommunications security expert was so concerned, he actually filed a whistleblower report with the Federal Communications Commission. He cited his access to nonpublic reports and other “very concerning information,” and told the Federal Communications Commission that “there have been numerous incidents of successful, unauthorized attempts to access the network user location data of communications service providers operating in the USA.”

He added that foreign surveillance went beyond location tracking and included “the monitoring of voice and text messages” and “the delivery of spyware to targeted devices.”

CISA's multiyear coverup of the phone companies' negligent cybersecurity enabled foreign hackers to perpetrate one of the most serious cases of espionage—ever—against our wonderful country. Had this report been made public when it was first written in 2022, Congress would have had ample time to demand mandatory cybersecurity standards for phone companies in time to prevent the Salt Typhoon hacks.

CISA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation have confirmed that the Chinese Government hacked multiple phone companies and accessed vast troves of sensitive call records. They even co-opted the system designed for law enforcement to conduct wiretaps and accessed phone calls of politicians and other high-value targets.

Vice President VANCE said his communications and President Trump's were compromised in this hack. The press reported that then-Leader SCHUMER was also targeted. This espionage incident was the direct result—the direct result—of phone carriers' failure to follow cybersecurity best practices, such as installing security updates and using multifactor authentication.

I know the Presiding Officer is very interested in this technology area as well. This is Cybersecurity 101—101—and yet Federal Agencies failed to hold these companies accountable.

As far as I am aware, and I touched on this, I may be the only one in the Senate to have read this report. But the contents of the report directly impact Congress, both regarding the security of the Senate's communications and issues that have been the subject of prior Congressional oversight. When Chinese Government hackers broke into the major phone networks last year, their targets included several Senators.

The report also directly discusses issues that have been the subject of oversight by Senators. In 2021, I wrote to the Federal Communications Commission, with several of our colleagues, raising concerns about foreign companies remotely administering rural U.S. telecommunications carriers.

Our group said:

We are also concerned by media reports suggesting that managed service providers may be partnering with for-profit surveillance companies, creating the possibility that these companies could provide their authoritarian clients with trusted access to U.S. telecommunications networks.

I am going to close with this. None of these security vulnerabilities have been addressed—that is the bottom line—either by government or the private sector. The Federal Government still does not even require U.S. phone companies to meet minimum cybersecurity standards. So, in my judgment, we are sitting here now recognizing that it is too late to prevent the Salt Typhoon hack, but there sure is an urgency to prevent the next horrendous incident.

So that is why, as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII,