

The erraticness of his foreign policy is dangerous in itself—saying one thing one day and one thing the next. So Americans are right to wonder, what on Earth is Donald Trump planning in Venezuela? Is Donald Trump nudging America into another war? Is he seeking regime change for Maduro? Will he put U.S. troops in harm's way? Nobody knows. All we have is a bunch of contradictory statements from Trump.

Donald Trump seems to be planning a war totally in secret—without congressional authorization, without any transparency, without any explanation for what his goals even are. And all it takes—all it takes—is one mistake, one miscalculation, one lapse in judgment from either side, and suddenly our troops could find themselves in armed conflict with Venezuela. Lives could be lost. American security could suffer.

So I want to be very, very clear. If Donald Trump proceeds with his plan to conduct strikes against Venezuela, Senators Kaine, Paul, and I will immediately file a War Powers Resolution to force congressional action to block the use of troops in Venezuela. The power to declare war lies in the hands of Congress, and we intend to exert that authority should the need arise.

Now, I urge my Republican colleagues to work with us to advance this resolution if it becomes necessary because the thought of another forever war makes Americans sick to their stomachs. Americans are tired of seeing troops bogged down in one country after another. Americans do not want a pointless war in Venezuela.

Donald Trump does not have the authority to send our troops into harm's way without authorization from Congress. Should Donald Trump proceed, the Senate will immediately respond. Should a strike occur, we will force a debate in Congress and force a vote to prevent the U.S. troops from being in hostilities against Venezuela. Our troops' safety and our national security are at stake.

I urge both sides to stand ready to assert the powers of Congress on matters of war and peace should the need arise because the rules of the Congress allow us to require a vote on this issue should the need arise.

#### SECRETARY HEGSETH

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on Hegseth, I want to say a word about Secretary Hegseth. I don't think we have ever seen someone so unserious, so childish, so obviously insecure serving as Secretary of Defense as Pete Hegseth, and that should alarm every single one of us.

Secretary Hegseth loves to look tough. He loves to boast about the lethality of our forces. He wants to be taken seriously, but yesterday he posted a ridiculous tweet of a cartoon turtle firing on alleged drug traffickers—a sick parody of a well-known children's book. This man is a national embarrassment. Tweeting memes in the mid-

dle of a potential armed conflict is something no serious leader would ever even think of doing. The only thing this tweet accomplishes is to remind the world that Pete Hegseth is not up to the job.

But, of course, this is much more serious than memes on Twitter. A few days ago, the Washington Post reported that Secretary Hegseth gave a spoken directive to kill all the occupants of the first alleged drug boat struck by U.S. forces. If the reports in the Washington Post are accurate, this may expose those involved to legal consequences.

What we need right now more than anything else is the truth, the facts, which is precisely what Secretary Hegseth has refused to give.

There are tapes in the possession of the Department of Defense that would show exactly what happened during these military strikes. Secretary Hegseth has an obligation to be truthful, so he should release those tapes. He says the Washington Post account is not correct, so why not release the tapes and prove it? If he refuses to release these tapes, it calls into question the truthfulness of his account.

The tapes will show one way or the other what happened and whether Hegseth is telling the truth. If Secretary Hegseth has nothing to hide, he should not fear being truthful.

In the meantime, Republicans in the House and Senate, including the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, have promised "vigorous oversight" on these strikes. This is very encouraging, and I thank them for working in a bipartisan way on this matter. But now Republicans in both Chambers must follow through. We need congressional hearings. We need full and transparent briefings from the Pentagon. Most importantly, the committees should continue to demand that Secretary Hegseth release—release—the tapes.

This is such a serious matter that Secretary Hegseth himself should come before the Congress to testify under oath about the nature of his order, the evidence supporting the strikes, and an explanation for what the goals are in Venezuela.

With our troops standing on a knife's edge in the Caribbean, we need a Secretary of Defense who can prove himself to be serious, sober-minded, and someone of high character. Sadly, Hegseth has the opposite of each of these qualities.

#### HEALTHCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Mr. President, on healthcare, so the holiday season is upon us, and this year, people are wondering how the hell they are going to afford their health insurance. The ACA tax credits the Republicans have refused to extend will expire, and as many as 20 million Americans will see their healthcare costs skyrocket. Many more than 20 million, even if

they have private insurance, will see their costs skyrocket as well.

What are Donald Trump and Republicans doing to solve America's healthcare crisis? Absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing. Donald Trump and Republicans seem to be in no hurry at all to prevent tens of millions of people's premiums from skyrocketing.

After waiting until the last minute to even talk about healthcare, Republicans are now in utter disarray. First, Trump said he would finally release his grand plan to fix healthcare. Then Republicans in Congress threw a tantrum and bullied the President into backing down. Now Republicans in the House and Senate can't seem to get on the same page about how they will fix this crisis that has been brewing under their watch.

So while Republicans are in complete disarray about healthcare, Democrats remain united to lower people's premiums and to bring their costs down.

Until Donald Trump and Republicans show they are serious about working with us to solve the healthcare crisis, Americans will continue to see their healthcare costs skyrocket, and they will know it is Donald Trump and the Republicans who are to blame.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

#### HONORING SPECIALIST SARAH BECKSTROM AND STAFF SERGEANT ANDREW WOLFE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I begin, I want to profess my profound sorrow for National Guard member SPC Sarah Beckstrom. Sarah was one of two National Guard members shot in a targeted attack here in Washington, DC, on the day before Thanksgiving. The other Guard member, SSgt Andrew Wolfe, is hospitalized in grave condition. My prayers are with him and his family, as well as the family of Specialist Beckstrom.

Sarah Beckstrom was just 20 years old. Andrew Wolfe is just 24. They are both at an age when many are quite naturally figuring out their path in life. But Sarah and Andrew chose early, and they chose service—service up to and including the sacrifice of their lives for their country and their fellow citizens. It is a remarkable thing, and may we never forget how much we owe men and women like Andrew Wolfe and Sarah Beckstrom.

Again, my prayers are with the family of Specialist Beckstrom, and I am praying for Staff Sergeant Wolfe's full and swift recovery.

#### AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, Thanksgiving is one of the busiest travel seasons of the year. More than 80 million

Americans traveled for the holiday last week. And while most of them packed up the car and hit the road, about 6 million Americans boarded planes to spend the holidays with relatives and friends across the country. I am sure all of them were breathing a sigh of relief that the government shutdown was over and air traffic control had resumed normal operations before their trips.

The impact on air travel was one of the most visible aspects of the chaos that ensued during the Democrats' 43-day shutdown. Flights were snarled throughout the shutdown, but it got progressively worse as the shutdown dragged on. By the time Democrats' shutdown entered its second month, the FAA was forced to order cutbacks in air traffic as a matter of safety, and more would have been required if we hadn't been able to finally reopen the government when we did.

I am relieved that air traffic was able to get back to normal levels before the holiday travel surged. I am grateful to the thousands of air traffic controllers who were on duty during the shutdown without pay and who work hard every day to keep planes moving quickly and safely. They have an important job, and I know that every controller shares a commitment to putting safety first, whether it is a normal day, the middle of a snowstorm, or a government shutdown.

Even before the shutdown, our air traffic control system was facing challenges, and modernization efforts had been a priority for both the Trump administration and for Congress this year. Before the holiday, the Commerce Committee's Aviation Subcommittee held a hearing that examined operations during the shutdown, as well as the challenges that existed prior to the shutdown and that still exist today. I appreciate Chairman MORAN's attention to these important issues. I am grateful that my colleagues are taking the time to delve into the challenges facing air traffic control.

At least our Republican colleagues are taking the time. The lead Democrat on that panel called the hearing "political theater," and the Democrats' witness for the Aviation Subcommittee talked only about—get this—ObamaCare. That is right—ObamaCare. A hearing to examine air traffic safety and air traffic control, and that was the only witness the Democrats asked to come and testify.

I am hoping that this was a one-time political stunt and not an indication of the attitude Democrats are going to take going forward, because we have a lot more work to do on this issue. Republicans remain focused on improving air travel and safety, and that hearing was just one part of our continued efforts.

Earlier this year, Republicans took a major step forward in air traffic modernization with the One Big Beautiful Bill, which made a significant invest-

ment in technology improvements for the air traffic system. The systems being used in air traffic control towers today are in desperate need of an update. This funding will help to deploy state-of-the-art technology to towers across America.

One example of the need for modernization is what happened at the Newark airport—one of the busiest airports in the country—earlier this year. In April and May, Newark experienced equipment outages that led to major flight delays and significant disruptions in air travel. The Trump administration moved quickly to address these issues and bring Newark back to full strength, but the underlying issue is aging technology across the air traffic control system—issues that are only exacerbated when adverse conditions strike, such as severe weather or the recent government shutdown.

The investment from the One Big Beautiful Bill will go a long way toward solving the underlying technology problems and will strengthen the entire system.

Another challenge is the shortage of air traffic controllers. We are almost 4,000 controllers short of full strength, which means that controllers at a number of airports need to work longer hours and more shifts to keep the system going. Addressing the shortfall has been a priority for the Trump administration, which has devoted attention to hiring and training additional controllers.

I appreciate that the administration managed to keep hiring and training operations going throughout the shutdown, which lessened the potential long-term consequences for America's skies.

Republicans and Democrats here in Congress are focused, too, on supporting hiring and training efforts, and this year's transportation funding bill, which I hope to take up in the near future, supports sustained hiring and training to add 2,500 new controllers next year.

Upgrading outdated technology and adding new air traffic controllers will make a big difference for the traveling public and for supply chains that rely on air cargo, and it will help deliver a more modern air traffic system, capable of providing more efficient and safer skies for all Americans.

Things won't be fixed overnight, but thanks to the Trump administration and our continued efforts in Congress, we are making progress toward a state-of-the-art air traffic control system for America.

I am glad that the system is back at full strength after the shutdown, and we are working to make it stronger every day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

#### AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me pick up where the Republican leader left off on air traffic controllers.

The biggest, busiest airport in the United States is O'Hare, when you count both passengers and cargo traffic. After the government reopened, I went to O'Hare, and I met with the air traffic controllers. I have known them for years, dating back to the first government shutdown during President Trump's first administration.

There are roughly 10,500 air traffic controllers nationwide in America. We need 14,000. What does that mean if you are understaffed by that 40 percent figure?

It means that those who are presently working work extraordinarily long hours. In fact, the normal routine at O'Hare with the air traffic controllers who manage that airport is to work 6 days out of 7, 10 hours each day. So in one of the most stressful possible jobs in America, they are working 6 days a week, 10 hours a day. The stress is overwhelming.

I told them that, with the closure of the government behind us, we have to do something, and I hope we agree on a bipartisan basis to do it quickly. We need not only more air traffic controllers, well-trained and ready to work—and that will take some time to find those people—but we also need new technology. We waited too long. We have talked about this issue over and over again. It is time to do something.

I want to salute those air traffic controllers. They have gone through a tough weekend, with Americans traveling for Thanksgiving, and I know that many of them have worked hard to make sure we have safe air travel.

I want to echo the comments of the Republican leader. This is an issue that should not go away. It is an issue we should address.

#### HONORING SPECIALIST SARAH BECKSTROM AND STAFF SERGEANT ANDREW WOLFE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to start by acknowledging, as well, the horrific—horrific—shooting of two National Guard members in Washington, DC, last week.

As was reported, 20-year-old SPC Sarah Beckstrom tragically passed away on Thanksgiving Day, and 24-year-old SSgt Andrew Wolfe remains in critical condition. We pray for his recovery and, as one Nation, we send our deepest condolences to the Beckstrom family.

Whether or not you agree about the delegation of National Guard troops to Chicago or Washington or any other place, that is really beside the point. We should make a note today that this is an acknowledgement of the importance of the National Guard to America's defense at home and abroad many times.

Time and again, those guardsmen and guardswomen have served our country and served them well. Living proof of that statement is my colleague in Congress, TAMMY DUCKWORTH, who was injured in a helicopter incident