

the United Kingdom have already invested billions of dollars in. It has got to be drugs—real strong drugs. But anyway, that is what they did.

Now, as best I can tell, other than Prime Minister Starmer—I don't mean any disrespect; I just think he is wrong. The only person on this planet who thinks this is a good idea besides Prime Minister Starmer is Xi Jinping of China. He has been for years anticipating that this might happen, cozying up to Mauritius, and they have become best buddies.

In fact, China has convinced Mauritius to sign on to two Chinese-instigated—actually, Communist Party of China-instigated—two treaties. One is called the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. This is a China-backed treaty. They convinced Mauritius to join it. It prohibits the research, stockpiling, and possession of nuclear weapons across the African continent.

OK, you say, what is the harm in that? Well, I am going to tell you in a second.

China also convinced Mauritius to become a partner in what is called the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation trade and security agreement. That is between China and 53 African nations. What does that do? That also maintains a commitment to building nuclear weapon-free zones.

Now, why did China do this, and why should we care? Because once Mauritius owns the Chagos Islands—even though they say they are going to sign a lease and allow the UK and America to continue to operate the military base, once Mauritius owns the islands, I can guarantee you that China is going to put the pressure on Mauritius to allow China to force inspections of military equipment on all of the Chagos Islands, including Diego Garcia.

Isn't that special? President Xi Jinping can't wait. He loves this idea of giving all this away to assuage Prime Minister Starmer's guilt. He loves this idea as much as the devil hates holy water.

Now, President Trump early in his second term—I have given several speeches about this—agreed to it. And I said at the time it was a mistake. A lot of people said it was a mistake.

He got some bad advice, and I know who gave him that advice. And they are no longer there. But be that as it may, I called the President and talked to him about it. And he said: No, I am going to listen to my adviser, and he agreed to it.

The President has recently changed his mind. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Many in the United Kingdom are starting to question the decision of Prime Minister Starmer.

The House of Lords, one of the legislative chambers in Great Britain, has started asking a lot of questions. The people of Great Britain have started asking a lot of tough questions.

Prime Minister Starmer—there will be an election soon. There may be a

snap election in the UK at some point, but Prime Minister Starmer is polling right now—he is in a lot of trouble politically. He is polling right now right up there. I think he is just a little bit below toenail fungus among the people of the United Kingdom. He is in deep trouble politically.

Every prognosticator who studies UK politics says that the next Prime Minister and the next party in leadership will be the Reform Party.

And if the Reform Party takes over in the UK, the Reform Party has already announced publicly that the first thing they will do is stop paying money on the lease that Prime Minister Starmer has signed with Mauritius. What happens if the Reform Party does that? I tell you what happens: The lease becomes null and void.

Anybody who knows a law book from a J. Crew catalog knows that if you sign a contract, that is all a lease is. And if you stop making payments, the contract becomes void. And so Mauritius will have the right—they will probably go back to the International Court of Justice, since some people in the leadership of the United Kingdom love it so much, and get a judgment to declare the lease invalid. And then what?

And then Mauritius, which China is courting, is going to become the owner of a joint American-United Kingdom military base on Diego Garcia, one of the most important in the world.

I have got rocks in my driveway that are smarter than this. And many people in the United Kingdom—God bless them. I love the UK. They are our oldest friends in the world. I spent some time there. Went to school there. I love the people of Great Britain. But many of them are waking up.

And they are starting to say to the Prime Minister: This is just a terrible—terrible—idea. And they are saying to the Prime Minister, no disrespect: But, look, we understand that your testicles are on back order from Amazon, but in the meantime, you just can't do this just because you feel guilty—just because you feel guilty because the United Kingdom at one time owned other countries.

Now, look, I don't know what is going to happen. President Trump—thank you, President Trump, for objecting to this. But I don't know what is going to happen if Prime Minister Starmer, who is polling right up there with fungal infections, decides to go forward and President Trump says no. I don't know what will happen.

If Prime Minister Starmer, because he feels guilty because the good people of Great Britain at one time owned other countries to which they have given their independence—if Prime Minister Starmer is determined to do this, here is what I hope he will do: Rather than giving up the islands to Mauritius, which eventually will end up giving our base to China, allow the United States of America to buy the Chagos Islands. Let's just buy them.

The United Kingdom will get money. The military base will become ours. China will not own the military base. And Mauritius, which has never owned any portion, not one square inch of the Chagos Islands, will not own them either. And the world will be safe.

I am going to end on this note. This is something that the Presiding Officer knows very, very well because I have talked to you about it.

This military installation is very serious. It is very important. Why? Well, President Xi in China and President Putin in Russia and the Ayatollah in Iran have formed a partnership, and the managing partner is Xi Jinping.

And their goal is to have Russia dominate Central and Eastern Europe, to have the Ayatollah in Iran dominate the Middle East, and to have China dominate the Indo-Pacific and be free to roam in Sub-Saharan Africa and South America.

And while they are doing this, Russia and China want to control both the Arctic and space. We all know that is what is going on. The Presiding Officer has seen the same classified information that I have. That is not a world that is safe for America. That is not a world that is safe for America.

I don't want America to be the world's policeman, but I will be damned if I want Xi Jinping or Vladimir Putin or the Ayatollah in Iran to be the world's policemen either.

This military base is key. So I am asking you, Prime Minister Starmer—I shouldn't have said what I said. Your testicles aren't on back order from Amazon. I take it back. Please do the right thing here.

If you are determined to give away these islands to Mauritius, which never owned them, which inevitably is going to help China, if you are determined to divest the people of the United Kingdom of these islands, please sell them to the United States. I will sponsor the legislation happily, enthusiastically to appropriate the money to do it. And then the United Kingdom can be out of the picture, and the United States can continue to control one of the mightiest and most important military bases in all of human history.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

MORNING BUSINESS

NOMINATION OF SEAN PLANKEY

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I will object to the Senate proceeding to the nomination of Sean Plankey of Pennsylvania, to be Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, CISA Department of Homeland Security.

Since July 2022, I have been fighting to get CISA to release an important,

unclassified report titled “U.S. Telecommunications Insecurity 2022” that the Agency commissioned from independent cyber security experts. Congress and the American people have a right to read this report and the shocking information it contains. The Senate has even passed a bill demanding its release. Last session, I objected to proceeding to this nomination until CISA finally released this report. Since CISA continues to hide this report from the American people, I must continue objecting to this nomination.

CISA permitted my staff to read the report in person at the Agency’s office in the fall of 2023. However, CISA has marked this unclassified report “For Official Use Only” and has refused to provide copies of the report to Congress and in response to FOIA requests from the public. CISA claims that the report is predecisional and deliberative and protected by a so-called “deliberative process privilege.” This refusal is unjustified. Setting aside that a FOIA exemption does not apply to disclosures to Congress, based on my staff’s review of this report, this report is a technical document containing factual information about U.S. telecom security. Although the report includes some general recommendations, the report does not recommend or discuss specific policy options that CISA itself could take to address this threat. And I want to emphasize that this report contains important factual information that the public has a right to see. CISA must drop its purported “deliberative process privilege” claim and stop hiding this important information from the public.

I have repeatedly urged CISA to release this report, across two administrations. I directly asked then-CISA Director Jen Easterly to release the report in a February 27, 2024, phone call; however, she continued to stonewall my requests until she left office in January 2025. On February 29, 2024, I wrote to then-President Biden, urging the administration to take action to address the serious national security threat posed by foreign governments exploiting U.S. phone carriers’ weak cyber security. In that letter to then-President Biden, I stated that “CISA is actively hiding information about [the threat] from the American people . . . CISA refuses to publicly release this unclassified report, which includes details that are relevant to policymakers and Americans who care about the security of their phones.” The Biden administration took no action in response to my letter.

The Trump administration has taken no action in response to my requests either. On July 28, 2025, the Senate unanimously passed the Telecom Cybersecurity Transparency Act, my bill that would require the report’s public release. Soon after, CISA told the press that it now intended to release the report. However, it has still not done so. Senator WARNER and I sent a November 12, 2025, letter again urging DHS to re-

lease the report. But in a December 18, 2025, phone call, Acting Director Madhu Gottumukkala reiterated that CISA would continue to withhold the report in its entirety from the public. In that call, Dr. Gottumukkala made a new claim that releasing the report would threaten our country’s cyber security. Given that the report details vulnerabilities that are already actively being exploited by our adversaries and urgently need to be remediated, Dr. Gottumukkala’s claim is frankly absurd.

CISA’s inaction on telecommunications security prompted the Agency’s top telecommunications security expert to file a whistleblower report with the Federal Communications Commission FCC, in the summer of 2024. Citing his access to nonpublic reports and other “very concerning information,” the CISA official told the FCC 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 cyber security has real consequences. In a November 2024 joint statement, CISA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation confirmed that the Chinese Government hacked “multiple telecommunications companies to enable the theft of customer call records data, the compromise of private communications of a limited number of individuals who are primarily involved in government or political activity, and the copying of certain information that was subject to U.S. law enforcement requests pursuant to court orders.” Vice President VANCE subsequently revealed that his communications and those of President Trump were compromised in this hack. This espionage incident and the harm to U.S. national security caused by it were the direct result of U.S. phone carriers’ failure to follow cyber security best practices, such as installing security updates and using multifactor authentication and Federal Agencies failing to hold these companies accountable.

The Federal Government still does not require U.S. phone companies to meet minimum cybersecurity standards. While it is too late to prevent the Salt Typhoon hack, there is still time to prevent the next incident. As such, I intend to object to considering this nominee until CISA agrees to release this report, which will enable Congress and the public to better understand the current threats and the need for stronger cyber defenses.

TRIBUTE TO MARK CONTRERAS
AND PATRICIA HARRISON

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize two extraor-

dinary public servants whose leadership has helped sustain and strengthen public media at a pivotal moment for our Nation: Patricia Harrison, president and chief executive officer of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and Mark Contreras, president and chief executive officer of Connecticut Public.

Mark Contreras recently announced his retirement after more than 7 years of distinguished leadership at Connecticut Public. During his tenure, Connecticut Public expanded local and multilingual journalism, strengthened its financial foundation, and continued to serve communities across the State with trusted news, educational programming, and cultural content. He also reinforced Connecticut Public’s role as the lead station for the New England News Collaborative, coordinating regional reporting on critical local and regional issues. Even amid the loss of Federal public media funding, his steady leadership ensured the organization remains resilient, mission-driven, and deeply connected to the people it serves.

I also wish to recognize Patricia Harrison, who is concluding her service as president and CEO of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, as the organization winds down operations following the loss of Federal funding. Throughout her tenure, Ms. Harrison ensured that Federal investments in public broadcasting delivered meaningful, local impact. In Connecticut, that commitment was reflected in CPB’s sustained support for trusted journalism, civic engagement, and educational opportunity. Under her leadership, CPB strengthened State government coverage in Connecticut, ensuring that residents had access to reliable, nonpartisan reporting on the work of their State leaders and institutions.

Ms. Harrison also supported American Graduate, an initiative that mobilized public media stations and community partners to help students stay on track to graduation and connect families with vital educational resources. In Connecticut, American Graduate has strengthened local collaboration and expanded access to educational support for young people across the State. In addition, Ms. Harrison championed regional journalism through CPB’s support for the New England News Collaborative, with Connecticut Public serving as the lead station. This collaboration enabled public media organizations across New England to work together to report on issues that cross State lines, providing deeper, more comprehensive coverage for communities throughout the region.

As a longtime supporter of public broadcasting, I know firsthand the vital role that organizations like CPB and Connecticut Public play in strengthening our democracy, supporting local journalism, educating children, and serving communities of