cannot and should not lead this effort. We must be supportive of other countries in the region who are standing and fighting against the ISIS terrorist organization, but this fight will have to be fought by countries in the region that are, in fact, most threatened by ISIS. They cannot stand aside. They cannot say: Hey, go for it, United States. Thank you, American taxpayers. But we in Saudi Arabia—no, we don't want our young people involved in this war. We don't want our airplanes involved in the attacks. We don't want our billions to go into this war. Thank you, America. It is really nice of you to do that. By the way, while you do that, we may play both sides of the issue and some families may actually fund terrorist organizations. But we really do appreciate your stepping to the plate because we are not doing that.

So that is where we are today. It is a very complicated, difficult situation. Again, I applaud President Obama and Secretary Kerry for trying to work through this. But this is what I worry about: I worry very much that supporting questionable groups in Syria—so-called moderates who are outnumbered and outgunned by both ISIS and the Assad government—I worry very much that getting involved in that area could open the door to the United States, once again, being involved in a quagmire, being involved in perpetual warfare. And what happens when the first American plane gets shot down or the first American soldier is captured? What happens then? I am hearing from some of our Republican colleagues who are already talking about the need for U.S. military boots on the ground. That is what they are talking about today, and that concerns me very, very much.

So I am going to vote against this continuing resolution because I have very real concerns about the United States getting deeply involved in a war we should not be deeply involved in. At the end of the day, if this war against this horrendous organization called ISIS is going to be won, it will have to be Saudi Arabia, it will have to be Iraq, it will have to be the people of Syria, it will have to be the people of that region saying: No, we are not going to accept an organization of terrorists such as ISIS. And we should be there to help, as should the United Kingdom, as should Britain, as should France, as should Germany. This has to be an international coalition. But the last thing we need is the United States being the only major military power involved in this war.

So I thank the Chair, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. REID. Madam President, what is the order before the Senate?

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS RESOLUTION, 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.J. Res. 124, which the clerk will report by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 124) making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2015, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3851

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have an amendment to the joint resolution that has already been filed at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 3851.

The amendment is as follows:

On page 19, line 15, strike ''30 days'' and insert ''29 days''.

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on that amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3852 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3851

Mr. REID. There is now a second degree amendment which has also been filed at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 3852 to amendment No. 3851.

The amendment is as follows:

In the amendment, strike ''29'' and insert ''28''.

MOTION TO COMMIT WITH AMENDMENT NO. 3853

Mr. REID. I have a motion to commit H.J. Res. 124 with instructions which has been filed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] moves to commit the bill to the Committee on Appropriations with instructions to report back forthwith with the following amendment numbered 3853.

The amendment is as follows:

On page 19, line 15, strike ''not later than 30 days after the enactment of this joint resolution'' and insert ''By October 31, 2014''.

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on that amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3854

Mr. REID. I have an amendment to the instructions at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 3854 to the instructions of the motion to commit.

The amendment is as follows:

In the amendment, strike ''October 31'' and insert ''October 30''.

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on that amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3855 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3854

Mr. REID. I have a second degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 3855 to amendment No. 3854.

The amendment is as follows:

In the amendment, strike ''30'' and insert ''29''.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on H.J. Res. 124, a joint resolution making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2015, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Barbara A. Mikulski, Dianne Feinstein, Richard Blumenthal, Robert P. Casey, Jr., John E. Walsh, Mazie K. Hirono, Cory A. Booker, Heidi Heitkamp, Barbara Boxer, Bill Nelson, Richard J. Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Amy Klobuchar, Jack Reed, Benjamin L. Cardin, Carl Levin.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under Rule XXII be waived.

Mr. REID. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the filing deadline under rule XXII for first-degree amendments to H.J. Res. 124 be at 2 p.m. this afternoon and that the filing deadline for second-degree amendments be at 3:30 p.m. today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to table an amendment to the joint resolution, as provided under the previous order, be in order during time for debate and, if made during the debate, the vote on the motion to table occur immediately after all debate time has been used and yielded back on H.J. Res. 124; further, that if a budget point of order is made, the motion to waive be considered made and the vote on the motion to waive occur following the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on H.J. Res. 124.

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

Mr. REID. There will be up to 4 hours 30 minutes equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

I now suggest the absence of a quorum and ask unanimous consent that the time be charged equally on both sides.

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

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I rise today to bring to the floor H.J. Res. 124. It is the continuing funding resolution for fiscal year 2015.

Let me explain where we are. We are in the closing hours before the Senate takes the recess before the fall elections. In the middle of all that, on October 1, our fiscal year begins. If we don't have a bridge between now and December 11 or around that, we could face a government shutdown. We do not want a government shutdown. We want to make sure we provide funding and make sure the government will not be shut down and that after the election we can return and do due diligence and pass this in a more comprehensive way.

Our job as the Appropriations Committee in Congress is to put money in the Federal checkbook each year to keep the Federal Government functioning. The American people want their government to work as hard as they do. They want us to combat the threats against the United States of America. They want us to honor our commitments to our veterans. They want us to meet the compelling human needs of the American people, and they want us to have an opportunity ladder so the American people can have a fair shot.

What we do is, we provide funding one year at a time. September 30 is our fiscal New Year's Eve. October 1 is the first day of the fiscal year. If Congress leaves before we pass the continuing resolution, the government could shut down. We don't want another government shutdown. I believe there is support on both sides of the aisle not to do that.

We know from last year that it was a terrible situation. Thousands of Federal workers were paid not to work. Other personnel, such as FBI agents, had to work for IOUs, even using their own money to put gas in their car as they pursued the people who wanted to undermine us. We know we don't want a government shutdown.

What is our goal for this continuing resolution? To avoid a government shutdown but to do more than that. To do no harm to existing programs so that we can meet our compelling human needs, the national security needs of the United States of America, and continue those public investments in innovation that make America the exceptional Nation and often the indispensable Nation.

It allows us also to lay the groundwork for an omnibus funding bill in December which will be a comprehensive funding bill including all 12 appropriations.

Also, it gives the President the fiscal resources to protect the Nation, to deal with ISIL, to make sure we support the needs of Ukraine and NATO, and also to work on a global basis to stamp out Ebola.

What I want to say to my colleagues, who will look at this bill and scrutinize it, is the continuing resolution is only from now until December 11.

Remember, it is a temporary stopgap bill. Also, it is at current levels of funding. So I want to say that there are no new programs and there is no new funding. As I said, it meets these needs.

I worked very closely with my House counterpart, the distinguished gentleman from Kentucky, Mr. HAL ROGERS, the chair of the Appropriations Committee in the House. We worked very hard to do bills where we thought we could bring individual ones to the Nation. Well, it did not work out that way because one party stopped me from bringing bills to the floor. I am sorry we do not have that omnibus, but poison-pill riders kept the Senate from considering appropriations bills on the floor and also the demand for 60-vote thresholds. That is a debate for another day.

So where are we in this continuing resolution? As I said, it keeps the government running through December 11, operating at the same amount of money as fiscal year 2014, with the same items and the same programs and the same restrictions. People might say: Have things not changed since last year? There are some technical adjustments that we do, but we just simply are extending what we have.

Again, what we do here is help the President, though, with what has changed—the three alarming threats that are facing us. No. 1, there is this growing threat of an organization called ISIL. People say: Are you talking about ISIS? No, I am talking about ISIL, because it goes beyond Syria—the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. What we have in here is the authority for the President to use title 10 of the United States Code.

What that does is allow the President to train and equip, with proper vetting, the moderates in the Syrian rebel forces. We also are supporting our President as he works with NATO and tries to deal with the Russian threat to Ukraine. Then there is another grim and ghoulish thing going around in Africa and spreading, which is Ebola. What we are doing here is providing the President with the resources to help Africa fight this problem. At the same time, while we are fighting in Africa, we make sure that NIH, FDA, and CDC have the resources to fight the issues here.

I could elaborate on this bill more. I want everyone to know that the CR is bicameral. It has already passed the House. It is bipartisan. I have worked with my counterpart in the other party, Senator SHELBY, who really has worked in a very rigorous way here, bringing the principles of fiscal conservatism and flexibility so we have this.

But I know there are other Senators who want to debate. I want them to have the opportunity to debate this bill. I will have more to say when there are not others waiting.

I want to yield the floor, but before I do, I am going to thank Senator SHELBY for the cooperation of his staff. We have not always agreed on the content or every line item. He is a very staunch fiscal conservative. But out of it all, working with civility, due diligence, and absolute candor, I think we have been able to bring a bill to the floor. I hope my colleagues in the Senate will pass this bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, this afternoon I rise in support of this continuing resolution which is now before the Senate. Overall, it is a relatively clean bill that carries forward current levels for discretionary spending and avoids another government shutdown. It contains a minimal amount of what we call anomalies or deviations from a straight continuation of previous-year funding.

The anomalies it does contain are limited in duration and subject to relitigation when we return after the break. The bill is also consistent with the total level of discretionary spending enacted in the Bipartisan Budget Act for the fiscal year 2014. But most significantly, this legislation will authorize assistance to elements of the Syrian opposition to help confront the threat presented by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL.

While I believe action against this menace is long overdue, it is unfortunate, I believe, that the action once again requires the involvement of our military and our resources. This authority for training and equipping appropriate moderate elements in Syria is no panacea. We should remember this. We should not expect quick and easy progress in turning the tide against this new terrorist threat that has developed in the region while this administration withdrew and hoped for the best.

History and our experience in the region tell us that this will not be the last time Congress will struggle with this issue. Even if we can identify, train, and equip a large number of fighters in a relatively short period of time, there will come a time when more will be required to defeat this enemy. It will not be of a short duration. It is unfortunate, I believe, that

the President has chosen to ignore the fact, thereby avoiding an honest discussion with the American people.

Nevertheless, I believe today it is important that we give the moderates in the region a fighting chance. If proper training and equipment can do that, we should support it until it becomes clear that we must pursue other means to achieve our goals. When that time comes, I expect Congress to have a full and open debate on that issue. But for now, Congress, I believe, has the responsibility to carefully track what the administration is doing with any funds that it reprograms for this assistance and how this fits into a broader regional strategy there.

The language in this bill will ensure that the administration provides the information to the Congress that we need to do our job. Once again, support for this continuing resolution will achieve two very important goals: one, avoiding a government shutdown, and maintaining spending levels currently in the law—very important. For these two reasons, I will be supporting the bill.

During the break that we are about to go on, and when we return in November, Senator MIKULSKI, the chair of the Appropriations Committee, and I will be working closely on an omnibus bill to put in place funding for the remainder of the fiscal year. It is my hope that we will be able to, once again, reach an agreement and complete the work of the committee before this Congress adjourns. I believe that this is an achievable goal as long as both sides come to the table with reasonable expectations. We have done it before. I expect that we can do it again.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. PAUL. Madam President, we have before us one of the most important duties of the Senate and the Congress; that is, to decide whether we will be involved in war. I think it is inexcusable that the debate over whether we involve the country in war—another country's civil war—that this would be debated as part of a spending bill and not as part of an independent free-standing bill.

It was debated as a free-standing bill yesterday in the House. There was a free-standing amendment.

It takes 15 extra minutes. One might wonder why the Senate—the most deliberative body of the world—does not have 15 minutes to debate separately a question of war. It will be thrown into an amendment or a bill over spending. Instead of having a debate over war, we will have a debate over spending. I think this is a sad day for the Senate. It goes against our history. It goes against the history of the country. Therefore, I have asked that the amendment that I will set before the Senate will separate the votes so we will have a debate over war and then we will have a debate over spending.

I have an amendment at the desk that would cue up the two separate votes on this legislation and allow the Senate to vote on the inclusion of the Syria language as a separate question.

I ask unanimous consent that it be in order for me to call up my amendment No. 3856.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I want to acknowledge, first of all, the longstanding views on foreign policy of the Senator from Kentucky and also on this process. What I want to say is that, No. 1, the Senate bill and the authorization in title 10 we have here takes us only to December 11. So this is temporary. What we hope is that the appropriate committees have additional legislation they are working on so that we can really look at other matters, such as a greater authorization on the war and the greater refinement of title 10.

So I acknowledge that there is much to be debated. I say to my colleague from Kentucky, we have allowed 4½ hours to debate. Quite frankly, if the Senator has views on it, I look forward to hearing those views. So the objection is not meant to be pugnacious at all. But in the way that the leadership has agreed to move this bill, that is where we stand. I look forward to hearing the debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Madam President, if there is a theme that connects the dots in the Middle East, it is that chaos breeds terrorism. What much of the foreign policy elite fail to grasp, though, is that intervention to topple secular dictators has been the prime source of the chaos. From Hussein to Assad to Qadhafi, it is the same history—intervention to topple the secular dictator. Chaos ensues and radical jihads emerge. The pattern has been repeated time and time again.

Yet what we have here is a failure to understand, a failure to reflect on the outcome of our involvement in Arab civil wars. They say nature abhors a vacuum. Radical jihadists have again and again filled the chaotic vacuum of the Middle East. Secular dictators, despots who, frankly, do terrorize their own people, are replaced by radical jihadists, who seek terror not only at home but abroad.

Intervention, when both choices are bad, is a mistake. Intervention, when both sides are evil, is a mistake. Intervention that destabilizes the Middle East is a mistake. Yet here we are again, wading into a civil war. I warned a year ago that involving us in Syria's civil war was a mistake, that the inescapable irony is that some day the arms we supply would be used against us or Israel. That day is now.

ISIS has grabbed up from the United States, from the Saudis, and from the Qataris weapons by the truckload. We are now forced to fight against our own weapons, and this body wants to throw more weapons into the mix. Even those of us who have been reluctant to get involved in Middle Eastern wars feel, now that American interests are threatened, that our consulate and our embassy are threatened. We feel that if ISIS is left to its own devices maybe they will fulfill what they have boasted of and attack our homeland.

So, yes, we must now defend ourselves from these barbarous jihadists. But let's not compound the problem by arming feckless rebels in Syria who seem to be merely a pit stop for weapons that are really on their way to ISIS. Remember clearly that the President and his Republican allies have been clamoring for over a year for airstrikes against Assad. Assad was our enemy last year. This year he is our friend. Had all of those air strikes, though, occurred last year in Syria, today ISIS might be in Damascus. Realize that the unintended consequences of involving ourselves in these complicated, thousand-year-long civil wars lead to unintended consequences. Had we bombed Assad last year, ISIS would be more of a threat this year. ISIS may well be in Damascus had we bombed Assad last year.

Had the hawks been successful last year, we would be facing a stronger ISIS, likely in charge of all Syria and most of Iraq.

Intervention is not always the answer and often leads to unintended consequences.

But some will argue no, no, it is not intervention that led to this chaos, we didn't have enough intervention. They say if we had only given the rebels more arms, ISIS wouldn't be as strong now. The only problem is the facts argue otherwise.

We did give arms and assistance to the rebels through secret CIA operations, through our allies, through our erstwhile allies. We gave 600 tons—let me repeat that—we gave 600 tons of weapons to the Syrian rebels in 2013 alone. We gave 600 tons of weapons and they cry out and say we haven't done enough?

Perhaps they are giving them to people who don't want to fight. Perhaps the fighters from ISIS are taking the weapons we give to the so-called moderate rebels. It is a mistake to send more arms to the Syrians.

According to the U.N. records, Turkey alone, in the space of a 4-month period, sent 47 tons in addition to the 600 tons of weapons. They sent 29 tons in 1 month. But there are rumors that the Turks are not quite that discriminating, that many of these weapons either went directly or indirectly to the very radical jihadists who are now threatening us.

If you want to know are there any weapons over there, are there enough weapons, is it a lack of weapons that causes the moderate Syrian rebels to be not very good at fighting, well, there are videos online of the Free Syrian Army, the army our government

wants to give more arms to. We see them with Mi-8 helicopters, we see them with shoulder-launched missiles, and yet we see them lose battle after battle.

We see American-made TOW anti-tank weapons in the hands of Harakat al-Hazm, a so-called moderate group. The Wall Street Journal reported that Saudi Arabia has been providing weapons such as this to the rebels. It also detailed millions of dollars in direct U.S. aid to the rebels.

We have not been sitting around doing nothing. Six hundred tons of weapons have already been given to the Syrian rebels. What happened during the period of time we gave 600 tons of weapons to the moderate rebels in Syria? ISIS grew stronger.

They say the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, expecting a different result. We gave 600 tons of weapons to the rebels and they got weaker and weaker and ISIS grew stronger.

Perhaps by throwing all of these weapons into the civil war, we actually degraded Assad's ability to counter them. So perhaps Assad might well have taken care of the radical jihadists and he can't because of the weapons. Perhaps we have created a safe haven.

The other night the President said in his speech that it will be a policy of his administration to leave no safe haven for anyone who threatens America. It sounds good, except for the past 3 years we have been creating a safe haven for ISIS. ISIS has grown stronger because we have been arming the resistance that ISIS is part of.

A New York Times article reports that Qatar has used a shadowy arms network to move shoulder-fired missiles to the rebels. According to Gulf News, Saudi Arabia has also partnered with Pakistan to provide a Pakistan version of a Chinese shoulder-launched missile. It doesn't sound like a dearth of weapons, it sounds like an abundance of weapons.

Iraqi officials have accused Saudi Arabia and Qatar of also funding and arming ISIS at the same time.

Kuwaitis—a Sunni majority country bordering Iraq—have funneled hundreds of millions of dollars to a wide range of opposition forces throughout Iraq and Syria, according to the Brookings Institute.

According to the New York Times, over 1 year ago the CIA began training Syrian rebels in nearby Jordan, thousands of them, delivering arms and ammunition. Over this period of time, what has happened? ISIS has grown stronger. Perhaps sending more weapons into the Syrian civil war is not working.

The New York Times also reports huge arms and financial transfers from Qatar to the Syrian rebels beginning as early as 3 years ago. No one really knows where this is all going to end, where are these arms going to wind up.

Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Center noted that the transfer of Qatari weapons to targeted troops has the same practical effect of transferring the weapons to al-Nusra, a violent jihadist group.

Let me repeat. Jane's defense analysts say that if you give the weapons to moderate—the so-called moderate rebels—it is the same as giving it to al-Nusra.

The New York Times further detailed that even Sudan has been sending anti-tank missiles and other arms to Syria. It is hard to argue there are not enough weapons floating around over there.

So the idea that these rebels haven't been armed is ludicrous. It is also ludicrous to believe that we know where all the money and all the arms and all the ammunition will wind up or who will benefit from these arms.

Why? Because we don't even know who these groups are, even if we think we do. The loyalty shifts on a daily basis. The groups have become amorphous with alleged moderates lining up side-by-side with jihadists, not to mention that, guess what, some of these people don't tell the truth.

Finally, moderates have been now found to sell their weapons. In fact, there are accusations by the family of Steve Sotloff—who was recently killed by the barbarians—that he was sold by the moderate rebels to the jihadists.

The Carnegie Endowment says there are no neat, clean, secular rebel groups. They don't exist. They reiterate that this is a very dirty war with no clear good guys on either side.

The German Ambassador to the United States has acknowledged this. The Germans are arming the Kurds. They are not sending anything into Syria. It is a mess, and they are concerned that the weapons they send into Syria will wind up in the wrong hands.

Many former officials are very forthright with their criticism. According to the former ambassador to Iraq and Syria, our ambassador says: We need to do everything we can to figure out who the non-ISIS opposition is because, frankly, we don't have a clue.

Think about this. We are voting or obscuring a vote in a spending bill to send $500 million worth of arms to Syria, to people who we say are the vetted moderate Syrian rebels. Guess what. One of the men with the most knowledge on the ground, who has been our ambassador to Syria, says we don't have a clue who the moderates are and who the jihadists are. And even if they tell you they are the moderates, they say: Oh, we love Thomas Jefferson. Give us a shoulder-fired missile. We love Thomas Jefferson.

Can you trust these people?

The rebels are all over the map. There are said to be 1,500 groups. It is chaos over there. We will be sending arms into chaos.

The largest coalition is the Free Syrian Army. I say largest coalition—really, all the Islamic fronts, al-Nusra, ISIS, Al Qaeda are all much bigger than the Free Syrian Army—but the biggest group that we give to is the Free Syrian Army, which currently has three different people who claim to lead the Free Syrian Army. We don't even know who is in charge of the Free Syrian Army. They voted out one guy, in another guy, and he didn't even know they were voting.

There are estimates that half of the Free Syrian Army has defected, many to al-Nusra, Al Qaeda, and to ISIS. These are the people your representatives are going to vote to send arms to. Half of them have defected. Half of them are now fighting with the jihadists. We have proven time and again that we don't know how to vet these leaders.

Two groups that were initially provided U.S. aid and help last year are good examples. A top official of Ahrar al-Sham, one of the largest rebel groups at the time, announced publicly that he now considers himself to be allied with Al Qaeda.

Just yesterday, our most recent ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, said the moderate forces have and will tactically ally with Al Qaeda, with Al Qaeda-linked al-Nusra.

Listen carefully. Your representatives are sending $500 billion to people who will tactically ally with Al Qaeda.

I asked Secretary Kerry: Where do you get the authority to wage this war?

He says: From 2001.

Some of the people fighting weren't born in 2001. Many of the people who voted in 2001 are no longer living.

We voted to go to war in Afghanistan—and I supported going into that war because we were attacked and we had to do something about it. But the thing is, that vote had nothing to do with this—absolutely nothing to do with this.

You are a dishonest person if you say otherwise. That sounds pretty mean-spirited. Hear it again. You are intellectually dishonest if you argue that something passed in 2001, to deal with the people who attacked us in 9/11, has anything to do with sending arms into Syria. It is intellectually dishonest—and to say otherwise, you are an intellectually dishonest person.

I said it yesterday: Mr. President, what you are doing is illegal and unconstitutional.

The response from Secretary Kerry was: We have article II authority to do whatever we want.

It is absolutely incorrect. We give power to the Commander in Chief to execute the war, but we were explicit that the wars were to be initiated by Congress.

There was debate over this. There were reports of Thomas Jefferson's opinion about how this was the legislative function. There were letters in the Federalist Papers from Madison talking how they precisely took this power from the Executive and gave it to the legislative body.

We hear: Oh, we will do something in December.

What happens between now and December? An election.

The people of this body are petrified, not of ISIS, but of the American voter. They are afraid to come forward and vote on war now. We should have a full-throated discussion of going to war, but we shouldn't put it off until December.

Secretary Kerry was asked: Will there be Sunni allies in this war on the ground, fighting to overturn ISIS? The ones, precisely—maybe who may have been funding it, which is Saudi Arabia—who should be the first troops in line, receiving the first volley, should not be U.S. GIs, they should be Saudi Arabians, Qataris, Kuwaitis, and Iraqis—but they should not be Americans.

According to the Washington Free Beacon, some of the people we have been supplying and some of the people we continue to supply arms to aren't so excited about Israel.

Surprise.

One of them remarked: Their goal is to topple Assad, but when they are done with Assad, their goal is to return all Syrian land occupied by Israel.

Mark my words. I said the great irony here would be that someday our dollars and our weapons would be used against us and Israel. They will.

We will be fighting—if we get over there with troops on the ground—against arms that we supplied to feckless rebels, that were immediately snatched and taken by ISIS. We will be fighting our own weapons.

Mark my own words, if these people get a chance, they will attack Israel next.

These are among the many problems I have in arming the Syrian opposition. Who are we really arming? What would be the result? Where will the arms end?

There are too many here who believe the answers to these questions when all indicators are otherwise—or maybe even when it is unknowable—they continue to believe something that frankly is not provable and not true.

I am a skeptic of this administration's policies, but this is a bipartisan problem. This is not a Republican or a Democratic problem, this is a bipartisan problem.

I do share the administration's belief that the radical jihadists in this region are a threat to America, but they need to think through how we got here. Radical jihad has run amok in the Middle East because intervention has toppled secular dictators. There weren't radical jihadists doing much of anything in Libya until Gadhafi was gone. He kept them in check.

Was Gadhafi a great humanitarian? No. He was an awful despot. But his terror was on his own people, not the United States.

The people in charge—if we can say anybody is in charge in Libya—their terror is to be exported. Some of them are fighting in Syria.

Where I differ with this administration is whether to arm the same side as the jihadists. We will be in a war on the same side as the jihadists. They said: Oh, no. We can make it a three-way war.

War is very confusing, but imagine: We will be in the middle of a three-way war where many analysts say when you are in the trenches with the so-called moderates that our money is going to buy arms for—when they are in the trenches, they are side by side with al-Nusra; they are side by side with Al Qaeda. Do we want our money and arms being sent to support troops that are fighting alongside Al Qaeda?

Here is the great irony. The use of force resolution they predicate this whole thing upon from 2001 says that we can fight terrorism. They have interpreted that to be Al Qaeda and associated forces. Guess what. The moderate rebels are fighting with Al Qaeda. We could use the 2001 use of force authorization, as Secretary Kerry understands it, to attack the same people we are giving the weapons to.

Think about the insanity of it. We are giving weapons to people fighting in trenches with Al Qaeda. If we interpret the use of force resolution as Secretary Kerry does, under that formulation we could attack the very people we are giving the weapons to. It is absurd. We shouldn't be fighting alongside jihadists.

This administration and its allies have really been on both sides of this civil war. It is messy; it is unclear. There are bad people on both sides. We need to stay the heck out of their civil war. I have opposed them for reasons that I think are becoming clear and I think the American people will understand. It is not that I am against all intervention. I do see ISIS as a problem. ISIS is now a threat to us. But I see our previous policy as having made it worse.

I supported the decision to go into Afghanistan after 9/11. There are valid reasons for war, but they should be few and far between. They should be very importantly debated and not shuffled into a 2,000-page bill and shoved under the rug.

When we go to war, it is the most important vote any Senator will ever take. Many on the other side have been better on this issue. When there was a Republican in office, there were loud voices on the other side. I see an empty Chamber.

There will be no voices against war because this is a Democratic President's war. The hypocrisy of that should resound in this nearly empty Chamber. Where are the voices on the other side who were so hard on George Bush who, by the way, actually did come to Congress? And we voted on an authorization of force. Agree or disagree, but we did the right thing. But now we are going to fight the war for 3 or 4 months, see how it is going, see how the election goes, and then we are going to come back and maybe we will talk about the use of authorization of force, maybe we will have amendments.

Colin Powell wrote in his autobiography:

> War should be the politics of last resort. And when we go to war, we should have a purpose that our people understand and support.

I think that is well thought out. I think he had it right. America should only go to war to win. We shouldn't go to war sort of meandering our way through a spending bill. War should only occur when America is attacked, when it is threatened or when our American interests are threatened or attacked.

I spent about a year—and I will probably spend a couple more years—trying to explain to the American people why Secretary Clinton made terrible decisions in Benghazi not defending the consulate—not the night of, not the day after, not the talking points—the 6 months in advance when security was requested. This is one of the reasons it persuades me that, as reluctant as I am to be involved in Middle Eastern wars, we have to do something about it. We either have to leave Iraq or we have to protect our embassy and protect our consulate. I think there are valid reasons for being involved, and I think we are doing the right thing but just in the wrong way.

If we want to have less partisan sniping about war, if we want to unify the country, think back to December 8, 1941. FDR came before a joint session of Congress and he said, this day ''which will live in infamy,'' and he united the country. People who had previously been opposed to war came forward and said: We can't stand this attack. We will respond. We will be at war with Japan.

He didn't wait around for months. He didn't wait and say: Let's wait until the midterm elections, and then we will come back maybe in a lame-duck—if there is a lame-duck—and maybe we will discuss whether the Japanese should be responded to.

War is a serious business, but we make it less serious by making it political, hiding and tucking war around. By tucking war away into a spending bill we make it less serious. We don't unify the public. Then, as ISIS grows stronger or they are not quelled by sending arms to feckless allies in Syria, what happens? Then they come back again and again. There is already the drumbeat. There are already those in both parties who insist that we must have American GIs on the ground. I am not sending American soldiers—I am not sending your son, your daughter or mine—over to the middle of that chaos.

The people who live there need to stand up and fight. The Kurds are fighting. They seem to be the only people who are really capable of or willing to fight for their homeland. The Iraqis need to step up and fight. It is their country. If they are not going to fight for it, I don't think we need to be in the middle of their fight.

Am I willing to provide air support? Am I willing to provide intelligence and drones and everything we can to help them? Yes. We have been helping

them for 10 years. We have a lot invested. So I am not for giving up, but it is their war and they need to fight. And I expect the Saudis to fight, and the Qataris and the Kuwaitis.

Even our own State Department says there is no military solution here that is good for the Syrian people and that the best path forward is a political solution. Is someone going to ultimately surrender? Is one side going to wipe out the other?

Part of the solution here is that civilized Islam needs to crush radical Islam. Civilized Islam needs to say to radical Islam: This does not represent our religion. The beheading of civilians, the rape and killing of women does not represent Islam.

The voices aren't loud enough.

I want to see civilized Islam on the front page of the newspaper and international TV saying what they will do to wipe out radical Islam. I want to see them on the frontlines fighting. I don't want to see them sipping tea or in the discotheque in Cairo. I want to see them on the frontlines fighting a war to show the Americans and to show the world that there is a form of civilized Islam that doesn't believe in this barbarity.

The United States should not fight a war to save face. I won't vote to send our young men and women to sacrifice life and limb for a stalemate. I won't vote to send our Nation's best and brightest to fight for anything less than victory.

When American interests are at stake, it is incumbent upon those advocating for military action to convince Congress and the American people of that threat.

Too often the debate begins and ends with a conclusion. They say: Well, our national interest is at stake. That is the conclusion. The debate is: Is the national interest at stake? Is what we are going to do going to work? I would think we would debate for days and this Chamber would be full.

Before I came here, I imagined that when war was discussed, everybody would be at their desk and there would be a discussion for hours on end on whether we would go to war. Now it seems to be some sort of geopolitical chess game or checkers: Let's throw some money. What is $500 million? Which is yet another problem around here.

But when we go to war, the burden of proof lies with those who wish to engage in war. They must convince the American people and convince Congress. Instead of being on television, the President should have been before a joint session of Congress—and I would have voted to authorize force. But it needs to be done according to the Constitution.

Not only is it constitutional, but there is a pragmatic or a practical reason why the President should have come to us. It galvanizes people, it brings people together. Both sides vote for the war, and it is a war of the American people—not a war of one man. Until there is a vote—if there ever is one—this is one man's war.

Our Founding Fathers would be offended, would be appalled to know that one man can create a war. We were very fearful of that. We came from Europe with constant war, where brothers fought cousins and fathers fought sons, where everybody was related and they fought continuously. We didn't want a king. We wanted the people, through the Congress, to determine when we went to war.

This President was largely elected on that concept. I didn't vote for the President, but I did admire, when he ran first for office that he said no President should unilaterally take a country to war without the authority of Congress. That is what President Obama said. He was running against the wars of the previous administration. People voted for him for that very reason, but he became part of the problem. He now does everything that he criticized. It is what the American people despise about politics.

When they say we have a 10-percent approval rating—Republicans or Democrats—it is because of this hypocrisy, because we don't obey the law, because we don't engage in important debate, and because we stuff war and shuffle war into a spending bill.

Bashar al-Assad is clearly not an American ally. He is an evil dictator. But the question is: Will his ouster encourage stability or will it make the Middle East less stable? With his ouster, will that mean ISIS replaces him? What are the odds that the moderate rebels, who have lost every battle they have ever engaged in, will be the rulers in Damascus? If we succeed in degrading Assad where someone can get to him, we will have ISIS. We will have ISIS in charge of Syria. It will be worse. We have to ask: Are these Islamic rebels our allies?

I am reminded of the story of Sarkis Al-Zajim. He lived in a city called Maaloula, Syria. They speak Aramaic there. It is one of the few remaining villages in the Middle East where they speak the language that Jesus spoke.

As the marauding Islamic rebels came into town on the same side of the war—who knows who funded them or where they got the arms—but when the Islamic rebels came and marauded into town, Sarkis Al-Zajim stood up. He is a Christian. He lives and sides with Assad. Most of the Christians side with Assad. So Sarkis Al-Zajim lives in Maaloula, speaks Aramaic, stands up, and says: ''I am a Christian, and if you must kill me for this, I do not object to it!'' And these were his last words.

I don't know who these rebels were, but they are fighting on the same side that we are arming and we don't know who they are.

Our former Ambassador to Iraq and Syria says we have no clue who the non-ISIS rebels are. So for all we know, the rebels that killed Sarkis Al-Zajim could well be part of the so-called vetted opposition.

When they win, will they defend American interests? Will they recognize Israel? If we want to have a good question, why don't we ask the vetted moderate Syrians how many will recognize Israel. I am guessing it is going to be a big goose egg. There is not one of those jihadists—there is not one of those so-called moderate rebels that will recognize Israel. And if they win, they will attack Israel next. Several of the leaders have already said they would. Will they acknowledge Israel's right to exist? Will they impose Sharia law?

Sharia law has the death penalty for interfaith marriage, death penalty for conversion—apostasy—and death penalty for blasphemy.

In Pakistan right now—a country that billions of our dollars flow to, that the vast majority of the Senate loves and will send billions more of our dollars to if they can get it from us—in Pakistan, Asia Bibi sits on death row. She is a Christian. Do you know what her crime was? They say blasphemy. She went to drink from a well and the well was owned by Muslims. As she was drawing water from the well they began hurling insults. Then they began hurling stones. They were stoning her and beating her to death with sticks. The police came, and she said, thank God. They arrested her and put her in jail because the Muslims said that she was saying something about their religion. Heresy is life in prison, death. These are the countries we are sending money to.

The other side up here will argue: Well, we are only sending it to the moderates in Pakistan; otherwise, the radicals will take over. Well, the moderates are the ones with Asia Bibi on death row. I wouldn't send a penny to these people. Why would we send money to people who hate us? Maybe we should just have a rule: No money to countries that hate us.

Will these rebels, whom we are going to vote to give money to, tolerate Christians or will they pillage and destroy ancient villages such as Sarkis Al-Zajim's church and village?

The President and his administration haven't provided good answers because they don't exist. As the former Ambassador said: They don't have a clue.

Shooting first and aiming later has not worked for us in the past. The recent history of the Middle East has not been a good one. Our previous decisions have given results that should cause us to be quite wary of trying to do the same again.

I would like President Obama to reread the speeches of Candidate Obama. There is a great disagreement between the two, and Candidate Obama really seemed to be someone who was going to protect the right of Congress to declare war, but it hasn't been so.

Our Founding Fathers understood that the executive branch was the branch most prone to war, and so with due deliberation our Founding Fathers took the power to declare war and they gave it to Congress exclusively.

President Obama's new position as President, which differs from his position as candidate, is that he is fine to get some input when it is convenient for us—maybe after the election—but he is not really interested enough to say that it would bind him or that he would say we need attacks now and come to us tomorrow and ask for permission. He thinks ''maybe whenever it is convenient and you guys get around to it.''

Secretary Kerry stated explicitly that his understanding of the Constitution is that no congressional authorization is necessary. I say, why even bother coming back in December? They kind of like it. They like the show of it. They understand it might have some practical benefit. But it is theater and show. If you are going to commit war without permission, it is theater and show to ask for permission. The President said basically article II grants him the power to do whatever he wants. If so, why have a Congress? Why don't we just recess the whole thing? Oh, that is right, that is what we are getting ready to do. It is election season.

The President and his administration view this vote just as a courtesy but not as a requirement. Even if Congress votes against it, he said he would do it anyway. He already has authority; why would it stop him?

Article I, section 8, clause 11 gives Congress and Congress alone the power to declare war. If Congress does not approve this military action, the President must abide by the decision.

But it worries me. This President worries me, and it is not because of ObamaCare or Dodd-Frank or these horrific pieces of legislation. As I travel around the country, when people ask me ''What has the President done? What is the worst thing he has done?'' it is the usurpation of power, the idea that there is no separation of powers or that he is above that separation. If you want to tremble and worry about the future of our Republic, listen to the President when he says: Well, Congress won't act; therefore, I must. Think about the implications of that.

Democracy is messy. It is hard to get everybody to agree to something. But the interesting thing is that had he asked, had he come forward and done the honorable thing, we would have approved—I would have approved an authorization of force. It would have been overwhelming had he done the right thing, but he didn't come forward and ask. He didn't come forward and ask when he amended the Affordable Care Act. He didn't come forward and ask when he amended immigration law. And he is not coming forward to ask on the most important decision we face in our country; that is, a decision to go to war.

Our Founders understood this and debated this. This is not a new debate. Thomas Jefferson said the Constitution gave ''one effectual check to the dog of war by transferring the power to declare war from the Executive to the Legislative body.''

Madison wrote even more clearly:

> The power to declare war, including the power of judging the causes of war, is fully and exclusively vested in the legislature.

There was no debate. Our Founding Fathers were unanimous. This was our power. To do it when it is convenient after the election is to abdicate our responsibility and is to make a serious discussion a travesty.

There is no debate more significant than this, and we are going to stuff it in a bill. We are going to stuff it in a 2,000-page bill and not talk about it, not vote on it individually. Our leaders must be held accountable. If we don't, there will be no end to the war. The ridiculous and the absurd must be laid to rest. We have all heard it before.

Toppling Qadhafi led to a jihadist wonderland in Libya. Toppling Hussein led to chaos in Iraq with which we are still involved. Toppling Assad will lead to more chaos and greater danger to America from the jihadists.

The moss-covered, too-long-in-Washington crowd cannot help themselves: War, war, what we need is more war. But they never pay attention to the results of the last war. Their policies and the combination of feckless disinterest, fraudulent redlines, and selective combativeness have led us to this point.

Yes, we must confront ISIS, in part for penance for the President's role in their rise. But while we do so to protect our interests here and abroad, what we need is someone to shout: War, war, what are we fighting for?

Amidst the interventionists' disjointed and frankly incoherent rhetoric, amidst the gathering gloom that sees enemies behind every friend and friends behind every enemy, the only consistent theme is war. These barnacled enablers have never met a war they didn't like. They beat their chests in rhythmic ode to failed policies. Their drums beat to policies that display their outrage but fail to find a cure. Unintended consequences drown and smother the possibility of good intentions.

Must we act to check and destroy ISIS? Yes—and again yes—because of the foolishness of the interventionists. But let's not mistake what we must do. We shouldn't give a free pass to forever intervene in the civil wars of the Middle East. Intervention created this chaos. Intervention aided and abetted the rise of radical Islam. Intervention has made us less safe in Libya and in Syria and in Iraq.

To those who wish unlimited intervention and boots on the ground everywhere, remember the smiling poses of politicians pontificating about so-called freedom fighters and heroes in Libya, in Syria, and in Iraq, unaware that the so-called freedom fighters may well have been allied with kidnapers and killers and jihadists. Are these so-called moderate Islamic rebels in Syria friends or foes? Do we know who they really are?

As the interventionists clamor for boots on the ground, we should remember that they were wrong about Iraq, they were wrong about Libya, and they were wrong about Syria. When will we quit listening to the advocates who have been wrong about every foreign policy position of the last two decades? When does a track record of being consistently wrong stop you from being a so-called expert when the next crisis comes up? We should remember that they were wrong, that there were no WMDs, that Hussein, Qadhafi, and Assad were not a threat to us. It doesn't make them good, but they were not a threat to us. We should remember that radical Islam now roams the countryside in Libya and in Syria and in Iraq. We should remember that those who believe war is the answer for every problem are wrong. We should remember that the war against Hussein, the war against Qadhafi, and the war against Assad have all led to chaos. That intervention enhanced the rise of radical Islam and ultimately led to more danger for Americans.

Before we arm the so-called moderate Muslims in Syria, remember what I said a year ago: The ultimate irony you will not be able to overcome is that someday these weapons will be used to fight against Americans. If we are forced onto the ground, we will be fighting against those same weapons that I voted not to send a year ago.

We will fight ISIS, a war that I accept as necessary largely because our own arms and the arms of our allies—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar—have enabled our new enemy ISIS. Will we ever learn?

President Obama now wishes to bomb ISIS and arm the Islamic rebels' allies at the same time. We are on both sides of a civil war. The emperor has no clothes. Let's just admit it. The truth is sometimes painful.

We must protect ourselves from radical Islam, but we should never ever have armed radical Islam, and we should not continue to arm radical Islam. To those who will say, ''Oh, we are just giving to the moderates, not to the radicals,'' it is going and stopping temporarily with the moderates and then on to ISIS. That is what has been going on for a year. Somehow they predict that something different will occur. We have enabled the enemy we must now confront.

Sending arms to so-called moderate Islamic rebels in Syria is a fool's errand and will only make ISIS stronger. ISIS grew as the United States and her allies were arming the opposition. So, as we have sent 600 tons of weapons, ISIS has grown stronger. You are going to tell me that 600 tons of more weapons will defeat ISIS?

The barnacled purveyors of war should admit their mistakes and not compound them. ISIS is now a threat. Let's get on with destroying them. But make no mistake—arming Islamic rebels in Syria will only make it harder to destroy ISIS.

Thank you. I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, the provision in the continuing resolution before us authorizes the President to train and equip friendly forces whose interests and objectives are aligned with ours so that they can fight on their own behalf, much as we have done elsewhere in the world—for example, a number of African countries which we have helped support their own freedom and independence, their own efforts to go after the terrorists who terrorized them. We have done that pursuant to provisions we have included in previous Defense authorization bills.

This year, as our Presiding Officer knows as a very important member of our committee, when the Armed Services Committee marked up the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, we approved a similar Syria train-and-equip provision by a bipartisan vote of 23 to 3.

While ISIS is currently focused on building an Islamic caliphate in the Middle East, its poisonous ideology is hostile not only to the region but to the world, and there is a real risk that the area it controls could become a launching pad for future terrorist attacks against the United States and its friends and allies. ISIS is terrorizing the Iraqi and the Syrian people, engaging in kidnappings, killings, persecutions of religious minorities, and attacking schools, hospitals, and cultural sites.

The threat to Americans and American interests was dramatically and tragically brought home recently by the brutal beheading of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff and British aid worker David Haines.

The President has announced a four-pronged strategy to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIS. Those four prongs are as follows: first, increased support to Iraqi, Kurdish, and Syrian opposition forces on the ground; second, a systemic campaign of airstrikes against ISIS; third, improved intelligence and efforts to cut off ISIS's funding and recruiting; and fourth, continued humanitarian assistance to ISIS's victims.

Our senior military leaders support the President's strategy. When General Dempsey testified before the Armed Services Committee, I asked whether he personally supports the President's strategy, and of course I asked the question exactly that way—''Do you personally support the President's strategy?''—so that we would get his own answer and not simply the answer he might feel he has to give because of his Commander in Chief's position.

When we ask military officers for their own personal position, that is what they must give us. When we have confirmation hearings, we ask them that question: Will you give us your own personal opinion when you come before us even though it might differ from the administration in power? That is one of the questions we ask on every confirmation, and, of course, if we don't get the answer that they will, there will not be a confirmation.

So we asked and I asked as my first question a few days ago whether General Dempsey as Chairman of our Joint Chiefs of Staff personally supports the President's strategy, and his response was, ''I do.'' He explained that the best way forward runs ''through a coalition of Arab and Muslim partners and not through ownership of this fight by the United States.'' Training and equipping the moderate Syrian opposition is a critical step. As General Dempsey explained, we need to build ''a force of vetted, trained moderate Syrians to take on ISIL in Syria'' because ''as long as ISIL enjoys the safe haven in Syria, it will remain a formidable force and a threat.''

Some colleagues have expressed the concern that this new military effort could lead us back into a quagmire that we entered with the Iraq invasion in 2003, but what we are voting on here is virtually the opposite of what was voted on in the 2002 Authorization for the Use of Military Force in Iraq.

I voted against the Iraq authorization in 2002. I am voting for this train-and-equip authority today. The differences are huge between what was voted on in 2002 and what we are voting on today.

First, in 2003, we invaded Iraq and threw out Saddam Hussein's government. This year, by contrast, the Iraqi Government has requested our assistance against ISIS. This request has been joined by leaders of Iraq's Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds, and other religious minorities. The global community will provide support in response to this request, but ISIS remains a problem that only Iraqis and Syrians can solve. They can solve it with our help, but only they can solve it.

I am continuing on the differences. Indeed, the contrast between what we are voting on today and what was voted on in 2002 is relative to the same country, but what a difference.

In 2003, the United States and Britain invaded Iraq with token support from a handful of Western partners. It was a unilateral approach without visible participation or support from Arab or Muslim nations. It helped spawn Iraqi resistance, including Al Qaeda in Iraq, the predecessor to ISIS. Al Qaeda in Iraq and ISIS didn't exist before our invasion of Iraq in 2003. They are a direct response to our unilateral action in Iraq. This year, by contrast—and what a contrast—we are seeing the participation of key Arab and Muslim States in the region and their active, visible role will be critical to the effectiveness of any international coalition.

Our senior military and civilian leaders recognize, as General Dempsey testified before our committee, that ISIS ''will only be defeated when moderate Arab and Muslim populations in the region reject it.''

The recent international conferences in Jeddah and Paris were a good start, with a number of Arab States declaring their shared commitment—and this was a public statement—to develop a strategy ''to destroy ISIL wherever it is, including in both Iraq and Syria,'' and joining in an international pledge to use ''whatever means necessary'' to achieve this goal.

The contrast to the Iraq invasion of 2003 is particularly sharp with regard to ground combat troops. In 2003, almost 200,000 American and British combat troops invaded Iraq. Only after years of relentless ground combat operations were we able to get our troops out. This year, by contrast, the President's policy is that ground combat operations in Iraq and Syria will not be carried out by us, but by Iraqis, Kurds, and Syrians. While the United States and a broad coalition of nations, including Arab and Muslim countries, will support this effort, there is no plan to have American combat forces on the ground.

As General Dempsey explained to the Armed Services Committee, U.S. forces ''are not participating in direct combat. There is no intention for them to do so.'' You wouldn't know that if you read the press coverage of his testimony, so I will repeat it in the wan hope that maybe this time his statement will be covered. General Dempsey said we ''are not participating in direct combat. There is no intention for them to do so.'' General Dempsey was talking about the U.S. Armed Forces.

General Dempsey added a caveat that if circumstances change, he might, for instance, recommend to the President that U.S. advisers be authorized to accompany Iraqi security forces into combat. He was clear that these comments were focused on how our forces could best and most appropriately advise the Iraqis on their combat operations.

Senator GRAHAM asked General Dempsey whether he thought they could defeat ISIL without us being on the ground. The question he asked was: ''If you think they can [defeat ISIL] without us being on the ground, just say yes,'' and General Dempsey responded, ''Yes.''

I saw that in all of one newspaper article across the country.

Our senior military leaders, of course, reserve the right to reconsider their recommendations based on conditions on the ground. I would expect that General Dempsey would say, just as any general would say, we must be free to change a recommendation to the President if circumstances on the ground change. That is a very different statement from what the press put into General Dempsey's mouth when they said General Dempsey suggested we may need U.S. combat forces. The direct answer of General Dempsey was: We have no plan to do it. We believe they can do it without us, and, of course, if conditions change, I must make a different recommendation, or at least might make a different recommendation to the Commander in Chief.

At the end of the day, of course, the President, who is the Commander in Chief, and not the military, will establish policy. Even if conditions change and even if General Dempsey decided to recommend a different role for U.S. ground combat troops, it would just be that, a recommendation.

The struggle against ISIS in Iraq and in Syria will be a long and hard one and we should give it our support. We cannot take the place of Iraqis and Syrians. They must purge the poison they have in their country. These extremist groups, such as ISIS and Al Qaeda, must be purged by the people they plague, but we can help these people get rid of this poison.

We are already working with Muslim and Arab countries that are openly uniting against a poisonous strain of Islam. It threatens them even more than it threatens us. This has to be an Iraqi and Syrian fight—an Arab and a Muslim fight—and not a Western fight if it is going to be successful. It will be highly destructive to our efforts to bring about a broad coalition if Congress and the President appear disunited.

We are asking Arab and Muslim countries to openly take on a plague, a cancer, a poison in their midst. That is what we are asking of them. There has been too much behind-the-scenes support, too much quiet support or opposition, too much inconsistency from a number of Arab and Muslim countries. So what the President and Secretary Kerry are doing is not just helping to organize a broad coalition of Western and Muslim countries to go after this stain, this threat that is in their midst, what we are asking them to do is to do it openly so their people see that their governments, and indeed their people, are threatened by this terror poison in their midst. What is critical, and what is so hugely different is this time it will be an international coalition going after terrorists and not just a Western invasion of a Muslim country.

It would be, again, destructive of our efforts to get open support in the Muslim and Arab world for going after these terrorists—this stain called ISIS—if Congress and the President are disunited. So we should give our support to the provision authorizing the training and equipping of vetted, moderate Syrian opposition forces. I hope we do it on a bipartisan basis here, making it then not only bipartisan but also bicameral. What an important statement that will be to the very countries that are seeking to help rid themselves of this cancer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, when we head to the Senate floor, we make choices. We first choose how to get here—whether to take the subway or walk. We choose whether to stop and talk to a colleague or two along the way. We also choose whether to speak to the press, and normally there are plenty of reporters available to speak to. I and many of my colleagues are often picky about who we talk to. I like talking to reporters just fine, but my staff gets a little nervous.

Last week, after coming out of the secure briefing on the situation in the Middle East, I went up to the first reporter I saw, because in that briefing no one asked how much this war with ISIL would cost or how we were going to pay for it. At the end of the briefing I asked those questions myself. But it is telling that no one up to that point and time had voiced their concerns about costs, which leads me to ask: Are we putting another war in the Middle East on a credit card? Will it be added to our debt? Will our grandchildren once again have to pay for our choices today?

I also asked what domestic programs will be cut if this war is an unpaid war. Will they cut improvements to our highways, Head Start, Violence Against Women Act funding?

We are not having a real debate. We will be voting on whether to authorize the training of moderate Syrian rebels to fight the Islamic State.

Earlier this year the President told us this would cost about $500 million. We can say this bill contains no specific dollar amount, but that is what this administration is going to spend, and that is just a start. This discussion will take less than half a day. We need more information. We have had some briefings and some of the committees up here have had some hearings, but the Senate needs a real debate on the extent of our involvement in Iraq and Syria and with ISIL. We need more information, and that is why I am speaking today and why I spoke to the press last week. After all, $500 million is a lot of money. That would go a long way in a State such as Montana where we need to upgrade our roads, bridges, fund pre-kindergarten education, and take care of our public lands.

This week the President said he will spend up to $1 billion to combat the threat of Ebola in West Africa. I am not going to argue that there is a strong case for these requests. ISIL and Ebola are terrible in their own rights, and no one would think twice if we wiped them from the face of the Earth. But I do have questions about how we pay for these kinds of actions and what our long-term strategy is.

The President requested $58 billion for additional defense spending for the 2015 fiscal year. That is spending on top of the $490 billion that is just a part of the normal Defense Department's budget.

But the bill we are voting on today puts the defense budget on auto pilot. There is no chance to find other places to cut spending. There are no chances to raise revenue so we don't just put this new spending on the credit card and on the backs of our grandchildren.

Folks will say this bill is only for 2 months. They will say that on December 11, when this bill expires, we can pursue the defense budget to cut programs that aren't working to pay for this new military action. But we all know that is a heavy lift in a city where it is easier to spend than it is to save, especially when we are already dipping our hands into the pot to fight ISIL and Ebola.

Over a decade ago we sent American servicemembers to Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Americans lost sons and daughters, husbands and wives. Families made great personal sacrifices, but our government never asked us to sacrifice as a whole. We didn't raise taxes. We didn't cut spending. We didn't set aside money to take care of our veterans who returned from the battlefield with wounds both seen and unseen. As a result, combined with massive tax cuts, our deficit and our debt exploded.

Now $500 million is a far cry from the hundreds of billions of dollars we spent in Iraq over the last decade, but this is just a start. We must stop putting wars on credit cards. I wonder if once we start an overseas conflict, do we know when and where it will stop? Do we know what our spending will achieve?

Over the last 5 years, we have actually had some progress on deficit reduction. We reduced the deficit by two-thirds. But all that is at risk with the beginning of a new conflict.

We simply have too many unanswered questions.

The President says we are backed by a coalition of nations ready to join our fight against ISIS, but will it be a real coalition? Violent extremists are threats to peace-loving societies no matter where they are, and I agree with the President that we need to contain and destroy ISIL before it gets stronger. But only a real coalition, one that includes strong commitments of money, equipment, and manpower from Middle Eastern, Asian, South American, and European nations will lead to a long-term stability in that region.

These allies should be footing their share of the bill. As I mentioned, Americans—whether today's taxpayers or tomorrow's—should not shoulder a disproportionate burden of the cost. After all, if countries such as Saudi Arabia or Turkey feel the growth of ISIL, they should make real commitments to this war-fighting effort. That is what happened during the first gulf war. In that war, members of the coalition contributed more than 80 percent of that war's costs. Because if ISIL is truly a worldwide problem, then there should be a worldwide response and commitment to addressing that problem. If ISIL is threatening to upset the balance of power in the Middle East, then Middle Eastern nations must step up. If terrorists and ISIL are a worldwide threat, then the world must step up. Anything else is unacceptable.

Some say that in order to ensure world peace, America must be a world leader. They say no other country is prepared to be the world's policeman. World peace is important, but true peace stems from our ability to rally

other nations to our cause. When we convince someone of the merit of our argument, when we form strong alliances that stand the test of time, when we act in concert with other nations, our word and our acts become stronger, and the world's respect grows.

We are told today that other countries will respond, that other folks are joining the fight. But actions speak louder than words. I, for one, would like to see more of it before I vote to commit America's taxpayers' money to this fight.

Eleven years ago, we invaded Iraq without a real coalition, and we built our argument on false pretenses. Moving forward, we must have a real debate, a sound strategy, and an end game.

This body is historically the world's greatest deliberative body. It was here that men such as Daniel Webster and Henry Clay deliberated. We are not having that kind of debate today. We are not gathering more information. There were committee hearings this week, but the die is cast, the wheels are in motion. As we say in Montana, the horse is out of the barn, the cows are out to pasture.

There are 1,600 American troops in Iraq right now who deserve a real debate. Many of them have husbands, wives, children, families. I do not know that I can say with certainty to them: Don't worry, we are training the right people to fight on the ground in Syria. If America is wrong about who we train and who we arm in Syria, my fear is that these 1,600 servicemembers will be joined again by tens of thousands more. For their sake and the sake of the American taxpayer, we need a fuller debate that will have a real impact on the decisionmaking process here in this Senate, and more of that debate should have happened before now.

I serve on the Senate Appropriations Committee. I know we must fund the government and prevent a shutdown. That is the responsible thing to do. The cost of last year's shutdown on Montana business was extraordinary and unnecessary, and I do not want to repeat that fiasco. That is why I will be voting for that continuing resolution later today.

I know some folks are opposed to this continuing resolution because they think we should pass appropriations bills individually. I appreciate that and I agree. But the fact is, the Appropriations Committee—under the chairmanship of Chairwoman MIKULSKI, who is on the floor right now, and Senator SHELBY—has worked hard and worked in a bipartisan way to try to make that happen. They have tried to reinvigorate this committee and make sure the Senate fulfills our constitutional responsibility to make the hard choices about how we spend taxpayers' money.

Ironically, some of the folks who have said they don't like passing the CR are the very same folks who have made it harder to pass the bipartisan bills that come out of that Appropriations Committee. Talk about playing down to the American people's already low expectations for Congress.

So we have no choice other than to pass the CR today. But I am tired of spending without a plan. I am tired of getting caught up in fighting wars in the Middle East, performing the same actions and expecting a different result. I am tired of repeating history without learning its lessons.

We can do better. And for the sake of our troops, for the sake of our taxpayers, for the sake of our kids, for the fate of our Nation and the world, we must.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

BALTIMORE ORIOLES

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, we have had some excellent debate here today on a very consequential matter of arming these so-called Syrian moderates. I know the Senator from Maine, Mr. KING, will be coming here shortly to participate in that debate, and I think this is a very good activity.

While we wait for Senators to come to the floor, I wish to take a few minutes to speak about the Baltimore Orioles. This in no way minimizes the debate going on now, but while we have the time for some of the Senators coming who want to emphasize this topic, I want to take a little bit of a breather here.

As my colleagues can see, I am wearing the Orioles' colors on the Senate floor today, and while we must address issues, we have to remember the kinds of things that make America great. In this continuing resolution, in addition to dealing with intense foreign policy needs and intense foreign policy crises, we have to remember that we are actually funding both our national security and the Department of Defense and very important domestic programs, including preschool, NIH to find cures for autism and Alzheimer's, and so on. We also want to not only keep the government going but remember what is so great about our country.

Of course, baseball is one of the things that makes our country great. That is why I rise today to congratulate the Baltimore Orioles who won the American East title. As I said, I wear their colors today on the floor and I hope to wear them at Camden Yards.

My home team not only represents the tough, enduring spirit of Baltimore, but the entire State. This team never quits, and it always plays hard. Sure, we tip our hats to the rest of the American East, including the Yankees, the Red Sox, the Rays, the Blue Jays, but this is our year.

The Orioles are celebrating their 60th anniversary in Baltimore. The O's, as we affectionately call them, arrived in 1954. I was a high school girl. I remember the excitement of the team coming, our first major league team. We played AAA up until then. There was a big parade up and down Charles Street. Charm City was charmed by this new baseball team.

There have been many amazing events that have occurred since then, and, of course, fantastic and legendary players, including Brooks Robinson, Frank Robinson, Jim Palmer, Eddy Murray, ''Iron Man'' Cal Ripken, Jr. We remember our coaches such as Earl Weaver, who got the fans excited, and, of course, we remember Cal Ripken, Sr., who taught us the Orioles way.

So this year we have a team that, once again, is energized and on its way to the playoffs.

Anyone who has watched the Orioles this season at Camden Yards knows this was a true team effort. The American East title was made possible by clutch hits and home runs, spectacular catches and gutsy pitching. When the All-Star players weren't on the field, workhorse veterans and promising young rookies stepped up night after night.

Yes, there is Oriole magic. We have our manager, Buck Showalter, who, as my colleagues know, is a laugh a minute. I am joking. If my colleagues have looked at Mr. Showalter, they know he doesn't crack a smile, but he sure teaches his players how to crack the bat. His attention to the big picture and to the smallest detail is the way he has taught his team to function.

We think we are on our way to what is called the battle of the beltways. It is conceivable that we will be playing the Washington Nationals who have just won the National League East title, and a tip of the hat to our friends in the District of Columbia. We are as excited for them as we are about ourselves, and we can't wait to meet. I am hoping for this.

Three cheers for the Baltimore Orioles who have earned this fantastic title. We won't stop until we have a pennant flying high over our stadium.

I want to congratulate the entire Orioles organization, from the managers to the front office, and the owner of the team, Peter Angelos, who rescued our team many years ago from being sold out of town. Peter Angelos stepped up to the plate and saved it and kept the team in Baltimore, and he has kept the team on the go. Now that fantastic team, under great leadership, wonderful players, and the best fans in both leagues, is looking forward to the playoffs.

We are also looking forward to not only the game, but it is the spirit of community that is in Baltimore. Our city hall in the evening is lit up in orange. When we travel the city, we see people wearing the colors and laughing and giving each other shoulder to

shoulder and high fives. When people come to Baltimore now to go visit a great institution such as Johns Hopkins, whether a person is an orderly or a facilities manager, or whether a person is a Nobel Prize winner, everybody is wearing the orange. Whether people are Black, White, Hispanic, Latino, men, women, we are all there. That is because it is about baseball. It is about a team. It is about America. It is about the land of the free and the home of the brave.

So let's keep our government open. Let's be on the playing field and in the competition for jobs and opportunity. And I will be back for the lameduck, gloating.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. Madam President, I rise today to speak about ISIS—the threat, what we can do about it, and what we must do about it.

Why are we having this debate? Why are we conducting airstrikes? This is a clear and present danger to the United States of America. This group has done everything but send us an email saying we are coming for you. They have made comments: We will see you in New York. They brutally murdered two of our citizens.

If they have free rein in the area that is as big as the State of Indiana, I suppose, between eastern Syria and western and northern Iraq, there, undoubtedly, will come a time when they will strike here and in Europe and in other parts of the world.

I am here today to support the provision of the continuing resolution that will allow us to begin the arming, equipping, and training of the Syrian moderate opposition.

Why do we even have this discussion? Because the most fundamental responsibility of any government anywhere, any time is to protect our citizens. The preamble of the U.S. Constitution says that one of the fundamental purposes listed in the preamble is to ''provide for the common defense'' and ''insure domestic tranquility''—a basic function of any government. This is why we are having this debate today.

This arming and equipping provision is not a panacea. It is not going to end the war. It is not going to be easy. It is no sure thing.

A friend said to me this morning: It is the least worst option. It is one that we must undertake. It has to be part of the solution because to root out ISIS, whose headquarters are in Syria—not Iraq—there are going to have to be troops. There are going to have be combat troops. There is no such thing as a surgical war.

Where are those troops going to come from? Not from the United States—they have to come from within the Syrian opposition itself.

This is also important as a gesture to the coalition we are building to confront this threat. Having a credible coalition—which I will expand upon in a moment—is an incredibly important part of this entire strategy. Without a functioning real coalition, it is impossible, it is an impossible task. This cannot be a U.S. war. This cannot be a war of the West against this so-called Islamic State. It has to involve particularly the neighbors in the region.

I am also supportive of the general strategy the President outlined, but I think there are several points that need to be absolutely emphasized. One is the importance of the coalition. We cannot have a coalition that just holds our coat while we do the fighting. They have to be engaged in an active way—not just writing checks.

If we try to do this ourselves, not even if we were inclined to do this with our own troops, it wouldn't work. These have to be local faces on the ground. There are going to be boots on the ground, but they are not and should not and cannot be ours.

The second thing that is so important in this strategy the President outlined the other night is a trustworthy, inclusive government in Baghdad. The reason ISIS was so successful in this sweep through northern Iraq and into Mosul was that they were swimming in friendly waters. They were swimming in the Sunni regions of Iraq where the local tribes and Sunni leaders have been alienated and systematically excluded from the government in Baghdad.

If the government in Baghdad cannot build credibility with that group, this is a hopeless enterprise. Prime Minister al-Abadi needs to channel his inner Mandela. He has to be inclusive of even the people who were his enemies and the enemies of his sect at a prior time.

This has to be a government that can be trusted. Really what is going on is a battle for the loyalty of the Sunni population of Iraq to see whether they are going to be loyal to this brutal so-called Islamic State or to the government of the country in Baghdad. That is the challenge that is before that government today.

So far the signs are positive, but we are still in the very first weeks of this regime. But that has to be a crucial element of our strategy. So these are two pieces that are largely out of our control.

We can try to build a coalition. We can put pressure on the government in Baghdad, but these folks have to do it themselves. We cannot be the policemen of the Middle East.

The third piece is building the Syrian opposition. The same goes for Al-Raqqa, the headquarters of ISIS in Syria. There are going to have to be people on the ground, and they are not going to be Americans. They have to come from the Syrian opposition, and that is why that is an important element of the strategy.

I think there is another discussion we have to have. Unfortunately, the calendar doesn't allow us to have it today. I believe there must be a new authorization for the use of military force. The authorization that was passed right after September 11, 2001, has been stretched and strained to the point where if it is allowed to become the justification for anything, there is nothing left of the clause of the Constitution that says Congress shall be the one to declare war.

I have gone back and looked at the history of that clause. Very interestingly, the original draft of the Constitution said Congress shall make war. At the time, the Framers realized that Congress would not be the right entity to execute the war itself, to make the battlefield decisions. The Framers were adamant that the momentous decision of entering this country into war had to be in the branch of the government most representative of the people.

They went through history—in the 49th Federalist they talk about how throughout history unfettered executives, princes, kings mischievously and often on weak grounds got their countries engaged in war. They made a conscious decision that this responsibility was left with the Congress. Unfortunately, over the years, going back to the late 1940s, we allowed that clause to atrophy. We allowed the Executive to take more and more responsibility and power and unilateral authority. People are saying: Well, this President is acting unilaterally. This is nothing new. This goes back to Harry Truman and the Korean war. This isn't something that Barack Obama invented.

Presidents naturally want more authority. They do have the power to defend our country when the threat is imminent and real, but they don't have the power to commit American armed forces in any place, at any time, under any circumstances.

I believe we have a constitutional responsibility to consider this matter, to debate it, to argue about the terms of what the authorization should be—how it should be limited in duration, geography, target, in means of confrontation with the enemy. That is what we must do.

Finally, beyond this AUMF, beyond ISIS, assume for a moment we are tremendously and utterly successful over the next 6 months, a year, 2 years, and ISIS is gone, the problem is history has taught us someone will take their place.

The real issue is radical jihadism. We have to have a strategy to deal with that in the long term that doesn't involve trying to just kill them as they come forward. It was characterized recently as geopolitical Whac-A-Mole. We stop them in one place, and it comes up somewhere else, and we all know about al-Shabaab, al-Nusra, Al Qaeda, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and Boko Horam.

We have to be talking about and developing a strategy to deal with this threat to our country and to the rest of the world on a more long-term basis than simply having continuous—what amounts to—battles against elements of these people.

Why are they doing this? What is attracting young people to this destructive philosophy, and how can we best counteract that? I believe we have to make a decision today.

As I said, I also think we have to make a decision before the end of the year as to what the scope, limits, and authority of the President are in this matter. We can try to avoid it, but I don't believe we can.

On December 1, 1862, Abraham Lincoln sent a message to this body, and the conclusion of that message was that we cannot escape history. It will light us down from one generation to the next. I believe that we need to stand and debate, argue, refine, and finally reach a conclusion so that the American people can understand what we are doing and why.

The Executive will have clear authority. The rest of the world will know that this is the United States of America taking this position—not a President and not a few Members of Congress. That is a responsibility I believe we are ready to assume. This is a threat. It must be met, and we must participate in the decision to meet it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

UKRAINE

Ms. AYOTTE. Madam President, I come to the floor to, first of all, thank President Poroshenko for the speech he gave to a joint session of the Congress today. It was a very moving speech. I think it was a very direct speech, and it really showed how important it is that we stand with the people of Ukraine during this trying time with the aggression they are facing from Russia.

I come to the floor to say a couple of things. At the end of his speech, he used the motto of my home State—the State of New Hampshire: Live Free or Die. In New Hampshire we are very proud of that motto. It came from a statement during the American Revolution from General John Stark, and it really does not only have meaning to my home State of New Hampshire but also to the people of Ukraine with what they have been facing—those who stood in the Maidan and gave their lives for freedom and democracy in Ukraine.

I have had the privilege of going to Ukraine twice, both in March and also to oversee their presidential elections. In both instances, I was very struck by the patriotism, by their love for America, and their gratefulness for our support.

As we heard President Poroshenko say to all of us today, now more than ever they need American support. There is something I have been calling for—for a while, in fact. When I went there in March—and also I had the privilege of traveling with Senator DONNELLY—it was a bipartisan codel—and also in May, in both of those instances we had the request for lethal assistance so that the Ukrainian military would have the arms they need to defend themselves against this Russian aggression.

So today we also heard President Poroshenko call upon us again to provide the support for the Ukrainian military. They have fought and continue to fight and die for their own independence, freedom, and territorial integrity. The least we can do is provide them lethal assistance.

As President Poroshenko rightly said today: Blankets and night vision goggles are important, but one cannot win a war with a blanket.

I would hope all of us stood together today, both Democrats and Republicans, to say we stand with the people of Ukraine.

I know this afternoon the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has come together and marked up a very important aid package to Ukraine which contains lethal assistance for their military.

I would hope our President would see that on a bipartisan basis we stand with the people of Ukraine and we must provide them with this assistance they need.

Finally, I would say that the Budapest Memorandum that President Poroshenko mentioned today is very important.

We were a signatory to that memorandum, as was Russia. In that memorandum, the signing of it, Ukraine gave up their nuclear weapons in exchange for our assurances that we would respect their sovereignty, security assurances, and their territorial integrity. Obviously, Russia has trampled all over this. But I would say the least we can do is provide this lethal assistance they have asked for given that they gave up their nuclear weapons.

We signed on to that agreement. We should support them in their time of need so that they can defend their sovereignty. What country ever again is going to give up their nuclear weapons if we will not even give them basic military assistance when their country is invaded the way Ukraine has been invaded by Russia?

Now is our time and our moment. We all stood together in the House Chamber today for the people of Ukraine. What matters is our actions, not just our words and our standing ovations.

I hope we will stand with the people of Ukraine. I call upon our President to provide lethal assistance to the people of Ukraine and to provide the support and tougher sanctions on Russia—economic sanctions—for their invasion and their total disrespect for the sovereignty of the country of Ukraine.

I would defer to my colleague, Senator MCCAIN from Arizona.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. I always appreciate it when the Senator from New Hampshire defers to me—a rare occasion, I might add.

I rise today to speak in support of the continuing resolution on which we will vote. I do not do so because I approve of the bulk of the CR. I certainly do not approve of the process that got us here. It is a broken, dysfunctional process that deserves and has received the scorn and disdain of the American people. Long ago we should have been taking up these bills one by one. But that is not why I come to the floor today

I am voting for this CR for one particular reason: It would help the Department of Defense train and equip moderate, vetted Syrian opposition forces to fight the barbaric terrorist army that calls itself the Islamic State, commonly known as ISIS. I will support it. It is long overdue support for the brave Syrians who are fighting on the frontlines against a common terrorist enemy.

The current plan could have been decisive 2 years ago. Two years ago it could have been decisive. It is not now. We are talking about 5,000 whom we are going to train over a period of a year or more. They are going to be fighting against an estimated 31,500 fighters.

There are many seminal events that have taken place in this conflict. One of the main ones was when 2 years ago the President overruled the major players in his national security team when he overruled their unanimous and passionate argument to arm and train the Free Syrian Army.

The administration says that U.S. forces will not have a combat role. Why does the President insist on continuing to tell the enemy what he will not do? Why is it that the President of the United States keeps telling the people who are slaughtering thousands: Don't worry, we won't commit ground troops. Why does he have to keep saying that? Obviously—at least one would draw the conclusion—because of political reasons.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates had this to say. I do not know of a man who is more respected than former Secretary of Defense Gates under both Republican and Democratic Presidents. He said:

> The reality is, they're not going to be able to be successful against ISIS strictly from the air or strictly depending on the Iraqi forces or the Peshmerga or the Sunni tribes acting on their own.

Gates continued:

> So there will be boots on the ground if there is going to be any hope of success in the strategy. I think that by continuing to repeat that—

That the United States will not put boots on the ground—

> the President, in effect, traps himself.

That is the opinion not of JOHN MCCAIN and LINDSEY GRAHAM, it is the opinion of Robert Gates and every military expert I have talked to, ranging from the architects of the surge, to former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and, confidentially, leaders in uniform today.

The President said he will expand airstrikes in Syria, but they have testified that the President will not have

forward air controllers on the ground to direct airstrikes, which makes them obviously effective.

As we read today in the Wall Street Journal—this is remarkable, my friends—President Obama will be personally signing off on every airstrike in Syria. I say to my colleagues: I saw that movie before—it was called Vietnam—many years ago when President Lyndon Johnson used to select the targets in the Oval Office or the Situation Room. Now we have a President of the United States who is selecting targets of which he has no fundamental knowledge whatsoever. It is really remarkable.

We are going to train and equip these people to fight. Yet we are not going to take out the assets Bashar Assad uses to kill them—the air attacks, the barrel bombs; the indiscriminate killing of innocent women, men, and children; 192,000 dead in Syria; 150,000 languishing in his prisons. We are not going to take out or even give these people, the Free Syrian Army, the weapons with which to counter these air attacks which are so brutal and outrageous.

I would like to yield for my friend from South Carolina to make a couple of comments. One, the argument I have heard made here is that there are no moderates in Syria. Well, I think arguably one of the most important and impressive individuals I have run into is Ambassador Ford, who has really been a hero in this whole exercise. He says there are moderates in Syria. They can fight. They have been fighting. They have been doing incredible work with incredible sacrifice. I am trying to find his quote from when he testified before the Foreign Relations Committee yesterday. He did a magnificent job in doing so, as usual, in my view.

I cannot seem to find it, but I would point out that he says not only can they fight, but they have been fighting, and they have been doing a heroic job in doing so. That is also the opinion of people who know. So there are moderates. If we train and equip them, they can be effective. The problem is that we have not done too little, it is we have done too much. We have weakened Assad and hurt his ability to fight ISIS. ISIS is a problem for the Middle East.

If ISIS is a problem for the Middle East, I wonder what the Australians think today? Australian police detained 15 people Thursday in a major counterterrorism operation, saying the intelligence indicated that a random violent attack was being planned in Australia. We know what their object is. It is to strike the United States of America.

I say in response to these uninformed colleagues of mine who say the Free Syrian Army cannot fight: Syrian forces are seen stepping up attacks on rebels as U.S. sets site on ISIS.

Time after time there have been places ISIS has controlled and the Free Syrian Army has come in and then Bashar Assad attacks because they want to defeat them.

The fact is I see the critics come here on the floor of the Senate and talk about why everything is wrong, why nobody will fight, why we cannot arm the right people. Well, what is their solution? Do they reject the premise articulated by ISIS that they want to attack the United States? Do they contradict Mr. Baghdadi, who, when he left our prison camp, Bucca, said: I will see you in New York. Is that what this is all about? Of course it is a threat to the United States of America. For us to do nothing obviously will be a serious mistake.

I yield 5 minutes for my colleague from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Do we have time remaining?

Mr. MCCAIN. How much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republicans currently have 67 minutes remaining.

Mr. GRAHAM. I will be very quick.

I will vote for the continuing resolution because I do not want to shut the government down. I agree with Senator MCCAIN that this is not the right process, but we are where we are. I think the issue people are focusing on about the continuing resolution is the changing of the training of the Free Syrian Army from title 50, a covert program, to title 10, the Department of Defense, where it will be out in the open.

The reason I support the appropriation and the change in title 10—I think this is a long-overdue effort on our part to build up Syrian forces that can confront both Assad and ISIL, enemies of the United States.

To my colleagues who worry about the people we train and the arms we give falling into the wrong hands, I would say that there is nothing we can do in this area without some risk. But when you tell me there are no Syrians that you believe exist who would fight against Assad and ISIL, I do not believe you quite understand what is going on in Syria. I would say that the vast majority of Syrians have two things in common: They want to overthrow Assad and they want to get ISIL out of their country.

ISIL is mostly non-Syrians. They came from the vacuum created by a lack of security. When Hezbollah and Russia doubled down to protect Assad, who was just about knocked out several years ago, the Free Syrian Army was abandoned by us and the rest of the world and ISIL was able to fill in that vacuum. These are foreign fighters.

So to my colleagues who talk about how they worry, I worry too. I worry about doing nothing. I worry about finding an excuse not to do anything. It bothered me when Republicans embraced the position of President Obama just a few weeks ago that it was a fantasy to train the Syrians to fight for Syria. I do not think it is a fantasy to train Syrians to fight for Syria because they want to. This whole revolution against Assad was not to overthrow him and replace Assad with ISIL.

The people who think the average Syrian wants to be dominated by ISIL instead of Assad, really, I do not think they appreciate what is going on in Syria. That is selling the Syrian people short.

Having said that, the limitations of what the Free Syrian Army can do at this point are real, but training as many as possible makes sense to me. My goal is to keep the war over there so it does not come here. From an American point of view, I think it would be a huge mistake not to provide training and resources to those people in the region—in Syria—to do the fighting because we have common enemies.

Those who say this is too risky, what is your alternative? If we do nothing, ISIL will continue to grow and the threat to our homeland will continue to increase.

It is long past time to blunt the momentum of this vicious terrorist organization. A Free Syrian Army component makes perfect sense to me. Whatever risk is associated with that concept is well worth it at this point.

When we talk about Iraq, I hope the Iraqi Government can reconstitute itself. Their military is in shambles. The Kurds are hanging on in the north with our help. But to dislodge ISIL from Iraq and take back Fallujah and Mosul and other cities, as General Dempsey indicated, would be a very difficult military endeavor. From my point of view, the last thing America wants to do is take ISIL on in Iraq and Syria and fail.

If you do believe that it is about our homeland and that it is not just about the Mideast, allowing ISIL to defeat any force we throw at it makes them larger and more lethal over time. So the worst possible outcome is to form a coalition in Syria of Arab countries and they are defeated by ISIL because we do not provide them the capabilities they lack.

President Obama's insistence of no boots on the ground is the Achilles' heel to his strategy. This is a military strategy, I believe, designed around political promises. This is not the military strategy you would create to destroy or devastate ISIL. President Bush made many mistakes in Iraq, but to his credit he changed the strategy in a fashion that allowed us to succeed.

One thing I have learned over the past 13 years, you can have a lot of troops doing the wrong thing and it will not matter. When you leave no troops behind, that is a mistake. And if you have too few troops doing the right thing, it will not matter.

The President is right about this. We don't need to reinvade Iraq or Syria. We don't need the 82nd Airborne to go in with 100,000 troops behind it, but we do need to provide capacity to the Iraqis and any future coalition to deal with Syria that is lacking in that part of the world.

Like it or not the American military is second to none. The special forces capability we have can really be decisive in this fight. To every American, this is not only about them over there, this is about us here.

The better and the sooner that ISIL is defeated, the more decisive ISIL is defeated, and the sooner that day comes about, the safer we are at home.

I urge the President to not take options off the table.

I am voting for this change in strategy regarding the Free Syrian Army because I think it is long overdue. When the President does the right thing, I want to be his partner. Mr. President, if you will come up with a strategy to destroy and defeat ISIL that makes sense, I will be your best ally and try to help you on this side of the aisle. This is a first step in the right direction, but when you play out this strategy, which you are trying to do, I think it will not work unless you embrace American assistance in a greater level to the Iraqi military and to any coalition you could create in Syria.

The last thing I want this body to understand, this is the last best chance we will have to put ISIL back in a box so they can't wreak havoc in the Mideast and grow in strength. The stronger they are over there, the more endangered we are over here.

It is in our interests to help our Arab allies and our Iraqi allies destroy ISIL. It is not just about those people over there. Lines of defenses in the war on terror make perfect sense to me.

The best way to keep this fight off our shores is to engage the people who will help us carry the fight to the common enemy. ISIL is not only an enemy of Islam, it is an enemy of mankind, and failing to defeat these people will resonate here very quickly.

We have a chance. Let's take advantage of it. There is nothing we can do in a war on terror without risk, but now we are fighting an Army, not an organization. If we defeat ISIS, the war is not over. This is a generational struggle. But if you do defeat ISIL, as a turning point in our favor—if they survive our best attempt to defeat them—God help us all.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. McCAIN. I wish to add, again I found a quote from the testimony of Robert Ford, an unusual man, our Ambassador to Syria and a man who literally risked his own life. In his report he said: Many Americans questioned whether there are any moderates left in the Syrian armed opposition. There are. They are fighting the Islamic State and the Assad regime both. They are, not surprisingly, hard pressed, and they could very much use our help.

I assure my colleagues, from my many visits there and knowing these people, there are moderates in Syria today who will fight and are fighting. Unfortunately, they are being attacked both from ISIS and from Bashar Assad. This brings me to we need to negate Bashar Assad's air attacks and capabilities. Otherwise, we are going to train and equip these young people and send them into death, which would be needless.

There are several articles, one in the New Republic entitled ''We Can't Destroy ISIS Without Destroying Bashar al Assad First;'' another one, ''Assad Policies Aided Rise of Islamic State Militant Group;'' another one, ''Blame Assad First for ISIS' Rise.''

What was most disturbing yesterday about the Secretary of State's statements was when he said: Well, ISIL first. You cannot sequence them. They are too closely tied, and we cannot defeat ISIL in Syria if we leave Bashar Assad with his air capabilities.

There are no good options. A series of decisions have been made which led us to the point we are today, all based on the fundamental belief that the United States could leave the area and everything would take care of itself. What happened was that we left a vacuum that was filled by bad people. Now there is a threat to the United States of America.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution, but I also believe it is an act of cowardice that we didn't take up the bill separately, debate, amend, and vote on an issue of this utmost seriousness where, in one way or another—whether the President wants to admit it—we are again sending Americans into harm's way.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. BEGICH. I wasn't planning to speak on the floor. I will speak for a couple of minutes, but I appreciate my colleagues who have just spoken and their conversation, as well as many others who have spoken on the floor.

Let me make it very clear. This conversation I am having right now is not about the CR. It is going to pass. It is going to move forward. We have to keep operating. The artificial threat that it might be shut down if we don't vote in a certain way with regard to the government is not factual.

The CR is going to pass. The House passed it. People don't want to see a problem as they had a year and a half ago, so I feel very confident with where we are going with the CR. But I agree with the comment that this issue, regarding what is going on with Syria, should be a separate issue, should be debated separately. It shouldn't just be shoved into a continuing resolution for the purpose of getting all of this done because we all think we have to leave by Thursday night or Friday morning. It is a very significant issue, one I have already made my statement very clear after the President spoke that despite my colleagues on the other side—two of them who were just on the floor—I want to make sure I correct what they said—we just have differences of opinion and views.

We hear statements that people aren't informed or they don't want to do anything, that is not the factual basis here. We have different views when it comes to the issues of conflict in this world, where America should sit, what we should be doing, how we should be acting, who our partners should be and what they should be doing. It has nothing to do with the government being shut down, the CR or being uninformed. I think this body is well informed. We have had many briefings, many discussions.

The question is just our view of where we stand on the issue of do we arm the rebels in Syria to do something we hope they will do. That is the question, and that is the debate we are in right now. I appreciate at least the limited time we have on it.

Let me make my position very clear. I have made it clear before, but I want to say it again. I do not support the arming of rebels in Syria.

In the Appropriations Committee we had an amendment on this, which I voted for—not to make sure the funding didn't pass, but I think it was a statement that was important. This is not a newfound belief. I support the airstrikes. This is an institutional effort, strategy, and things are moving in the right direction.

As a matter of fact, yesterday or the day before Baghdad was being moved on by ISIL. Let me make it clear, ISIL, ISIS, whatever you want to call them, they are a terrorist group.

To say they are called the Islamic State, they are not a state. They are a bunch of terrorist thugs. Let's be honest about it. When they made a move on Baghdad, we came in at the request of the Government of Iraq to give air support. We did and then we pushed them back and continued to follow up. That seemed to work in that situation.

Here we are in a situation of do we arm the rebels, do we believe in combat troops, humanitarian aid? What is our role in this endeavor?

Again, I disagree with my President, and when I say that, the President of the Democratic Party. It doesn't mean I agree with him that often. There are times when we disagree quite a bit on many issues, but on this one I disagree. Arming the rebels and who they are today and who they might be 12 months from now—I don't know.

The bigger issue to me is also the Arab countries. I understand we have seen in the past few days they are starting to have conversations and wanting to participate, but this is their country, their region. What do they do? Where are they stepping up to the plate more?

Here we are, once again, going to have to solve some civil war issues in the Middle East. Instead, the countries in the region are saying, well, maybe we will help a little here, help a little there. They need to put troops on the ground. They need to step up to the plate, as well as the faith and religious leaders in that region because these

terrorists are a threat to the region and to our country.

The photos we have seen of the beheadings are horrific, outlandish, and outrageous. Don't get me wrong. This is a bad organization and should be dealt with in such a way, but we need the countries there to assist us in a much more aggressive way.

Today we heard from the President of Ukraine. He came to a joint session of Congress. Why did he come? Because he believes in his country. He is fighting for his country. He needs our help and he is asking for our help. He is not hiding behind closed-door meetings and trying to negotiate ways that they can't be seen asking us for help. He is asking because he wants to believe in democracy, what is right for his country. He is fighting for his homeland. His line—and I remember in his speech that he gave today, this morning—was you don't have to create the democracy, you just have to defend it.

But here we are in the Middle East with unusual allies because it is a convoluted situation. In some ways, we participated, but we also have to have the Iraqi Government be more sustainable. That means inclusion, which they haven't done. They are trying, but we have had to put pressure on them because now ISIL has moved into their country. As we know, some of those Arab countries, through some of those well-funded people, funded ISIL. But now the beast has grown so big it is out of control, and now they say: Whoops. We might have made a mistake. Now we need the United States to come in again.

What is the long-term plan for sustainability in the Middle East, to get rid of these terrorist organizations that every single one of those countries knows is bad for them? They know it.

But they don't step up to the plate enough. Every time we have to step up, and America—my wife and I have been to I don't know how many funerals, how many hospitals.

Are we asking—I heard some of my colleagues here now talking about combat troops. Absolutely not—absolutely not.

It is time for the Arab countries to step up, get over their regional differences, and know this is one organization, this terrorist organization, ISIS, ISIL—whatever you want to call them today—it is bad for them, bad for this world, and they need to stand and be more aggressive. That means combat troops on the ground for them, for them to do it, for them to step up to the plate.

ISIS is this terrorist organization, and they are making money off of oil, oil wells they have captured, shipping it out through one of our ''allies.'' Why don't we just dismantle these oil wells through airstrikes—stop their cash flow like that.

Probably we are not going to do it because I am sure we are hearing from people: Well, that is not really their oil. We will take them out, and then we will get our oil back. They own the oil right now because they are using it to fund their $3 million-a-day operation. Take out their oil wells, take out their cash flow. Then get the Arab countries to step up and do not arm with U.S. dollars and weapons the rebels of today who may not be the rebels of tomorrow.

Thank you for the opportunity to let me come to the floor and say my piece. It is going to be an interesting vote. I know the CR will pass. I will be in the minority, but I think it is important we put on the record where we stand on this issue.

Don't get me wrong. I believe they are a threat to the United States, and when they threaten our assets, our people, we will be on it and we will deal with them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I know the distinguished Senator from Illinois is scheduled to speak.

I just want to make clear that the threat of a shutdown is not an idle threat. I respect the views of the Senator from Alaska, a member of my own committee, who now says he is going to vote against the CR because he is saying: Oh, it will pass. It is an artificial threat.

The Senator is entitled to his views and certainly his vote on what he thinks is in the best interests of the Nation, but we have to pass the CR, and I would note it is not an artificial threat.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant majority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. There are moments when Members of the Senate have to reflect on the responsibility we are given—extraordinary moments, unlike other votes that we cast—because at least part of this important spending bill relates to U.S. military involvement in the Middle East. Reality tells us people will die if there is conflict. Of course we hope it will be the enemy, but we know better. Even some of our people are at risk to die in any military undertaking. So every Member of the Senate should take this vote seriously, and I am sure they do.

I remember October 11, 2002, as if it were yesterday. I was here in the Senate, weeks away from an election, and we were asked to vote on the invasion of Iraq. The buildup to this vote was overwhelming. The President and others—the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the head of the CIA, and a long list—had made the case to the American people that there were weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Saddam Hussein; and that if we didn't move in, strike, and stop him, they could threaten our allies, friends, and even the United States. We debated that and voted on it. It was late at night on October 11, 2002.

I remember that vote as if it were yesterday. At the end of that vote, 23 of us had voted no against the invasion of Iraq—one Republican, Senator Chafee of Rhode Island, and 22 Democrats.

I went down to the well of this Chamber and there were two of my colleagues there, Paul Wellstone of Minnesota and Kent Conrad of North Dakota. I said to Paul Wellstone, who was up for reelection: I hope this doesn't cost you your seat—because he had voted no as well.

He said: It is all right if it does. This is what I believe, and this is how I am going to vote. I thought to myself: He may not return to the Senate. Tragically, he did not. He was involved in a plane crash just days later that took his life and the life of his wife and a staffer. But it is an indication of the gravity and the importance of this job, of this Chamber, and of this vote.

What we are being asked to do by the President is much different than what we were asked to do in 2002, when it came to the invasion of Iraq. The President has identified a threat to the United States. It is called the Islamic State, ISIL. It is an emerging group that has broken out of extremist groups in the Middle East, and it is on a rampage. It is marching through Syria and Iraq in a way we have not seen extremist groups act. It is capturing territory which extremist groups seldom do, and in capturing territory it is doing several other things. It is taking all of the tangible assets of cities such as Mosul, raiding their banks, breaking into the vaults, taking their money, taking over oil fields and gas fields—producing a small economy and budget which is growing by the day. This is not the typical terrorist group which we have seen in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, and, in the process, in their wake, they are killing people right and left.

The butchery, the savagery of this group is really unheard of in modern times. It hearkens back to the barbarism of centuries ago. To behead two innocent Americans—can we imagine to do it with a camera running? It is just unthinkable what those poor families are going through even today as they think about this. That is part of their tactics, to intimidate the United States. Now they have done it to a British captive, and they promise to do even more. They are serious. They want to take over Syria and Iraq. Should we care? Of course we should.

But what did we learn from the invasion of Iraq? What did we learn after spending 8 years there that would bring us back in any way? Well, here is what we learned.

We learned that putting American military on the ground—the best military in the world—is no guarantee of victory. We lost 4,476 American lives in Iraq; over 30,000 came home with serious injuries that still need to be cared for to this day. We added $1 trillion to our national debt because under the previous administration wars weren't paid for, they were just added to the debt. And we have chaos in Iraq today.

Here is what the President is suggesting, and I think he is on the right

track. We are not going to put in ground forces and combat troops. Instead, we will rely on the Iraqi Army to fight for the future of Iraq. We will help them, we will support them with logistics, equipment, direction, air support, but they have to be on the frontline risking their lives.

Secondly, he said we are going to put together a coalition.

The United States ought to think twice in this century about how many more Muslim countries we want to be involved in invading, and what the President has said that is my starting point; we will be part of a coalition that includes Arab and Muslim countries that believe, as we do, that ISIL is reprehensible and needs to be fought back.

I think the President's premise is sound. Not putting in combat troops is essential. Putting the burden on the Iraqis is absolutely critical, and I support him in those three efforts.

Then comes our vote today. It is not about Iraq; it is about Syria. What are we going to do in Syria? Syria has just been a free-for-all of violence, terrorism, deceit, and carnage for 3 years. Three million people have been displaced, 300,000 have been killed, and the fighting is so intense it is hard to tell who is on what side. Oh, we know Assad the leader has his army, and he is fighting off all the resistance to his government. We have no use for him, but he has some military power, obviously. He is still there. We also know that, in addition to ISIL, this terrorist group, there are up to 1,500 other militia groups. They have neighborhood militias protecting families and neighborhoods.

What the President has called for is a challenge: Find moderate opposition forces who do not align with Assad that are willing to fight ISIL and stop them in Syria. That is our vote. That is what the title 10 authorization does. It allows the United States to train and equip moderate opposition in Syria to fight these forces. We have some pretty strict language in here—I just took a look at it again and I have read through it a couple of times now—about reporting back to committees: Let us know your progress.

So this is where we are. This continuing resolution will be the law of the land, if it passes, until December 11, if I am not mistaken—the Appropriations Committee chair, Senator MIKULSKI, nods in the affirmative—until December 11.

So what we are doing now is setting up a course of action in Syria to work with the moderate opposition to train and equip them to fight off this ISIL group. We will be back. After the elections we will back. We will be able to measure the progress that has been made.

Then, come December 11, we have a much larger question to ask: What do we do from that point forward? Will we continue the strategy? Assuming we do, I believe—and many of my colleagues share the belief—we have a special responsibility given to us by the Constitution that says the American people declare war—not the President—and the American people do it through Members of Congress.

So we will come back and start the debate on what is known as an authorization for the use of military force—a modern version, a new version applying to this situation—and it will be through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Armed Services Committee.

It is a debate that is long overdue. The President has invited us to do this. He believes he has the authority to go forward, but he said to Congress: If you want to be part of this, I welcome your participation.

Well, let's accept that challenge. So I will be supporting this continuing resolution. I will be supporting the title 10 authorization until December 11 to start seeing if we can form a force of moderate opposition groups in Syria to fight back on ISIL while we are working in Iraq to do the same. I think we have no choice but to do this—but to do it thoughtfully, without combat troops, with clear accountability and reports, and behind a coalition that has many Arab and Muslim nations that agree with us that ISIL is reprehensible.

Secretary of State John Kerry told us yesterday they have had meetings with the Russians, with the Chinese, and with the Iranians who have spoken up and said: We have to stop this group. They are going to destroy the Middle East. I think we have to take that seriously, and that is why I will be supporting this effort.

I know some of my colleagues disagree. I remember my thinking on that October night in 2002, that we should hold back and not get involved in Iraq, and I think I was right. I think history proved me right. That is why I have looked at this with a critical eye and with the understanding that this is not the end of the debate, this is not the end of the conversation. This is our step forward in ridding the world of this savage group that is killing so many innocent people, and we are going to do it as part of a coalition and alliance. That to me is the thoughtful and sensible way to address this.

We will have time to review our decision on a regular basis, as we should, to hold this President and any President accountable as we move forward. But this is something we absolutely must do as a Nation at this moment in time.

So I will be supporting this resolution, H.J. Res. 124, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

How much time do I have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 4 minutes.

Mr. DURBIN. I also wish to say a word about Secretary Kerry, who has been working night and day since he left the Senate, as Secretary of State, and he testified yesterday. I know what he is trying to achieve. I salute him for that and of course the President as well.

Let me hope that one thing emerges from this. I remember serving in the House of Representatives, and we voted on the invasion of Kuwait under President George H.W. Bush. I had my questions about that. I voted no. The House voted yes to go forward with that foreign policy. The Speaker of the House, Tom Foley, if I am not mistaken, followed that vote, where we decided to go forward with the invasion of Kuwait, with a resolution saying that now the foreign policy had been decided by this country, we should stand together in a bipartisan fashion to support our men and women in uniform who were engaged in this conflict. That happened, and we all voted for it—even those of us who disagreed with the policy.

Even after this vote on Iraq where 23 of us had voted no, virtually all of us voted for the resources that our military needed. My thinking was: DURBIN, even if you disagree with the Iraqi invasion, what if that were your son over there? Wouldn't you want him to have everything he needs to come home safe? You bet.

What I hope will emerge, even after the heat of debate over this whole question of ISIL and how we deal with them, is this coming together—a bipartisan coming together behind our troops, behind our pilots, behind those advisers on the ground. Let us show them solidarity behind their effort if we decide to vote to go forward. There is too much partisan division, and it certainly ought to stop at the water's edge when it involves support for our men and women in uniform.

So at the end of this vote today, I hope we will see emerging a bipartisan consensus that we are going to work as a Nation to accomplish our goal to end this terrorism as best we can or slow it down in this part of the world and stand behind the men and women of our Nation who are willing to risk their lives in service to that cause.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

EXECUTIVE AMNESTY

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, in a few moments Senators in this Chamber will cast one of the most important votes they will ever cast in the Senate.

With this vote, Senators will make a simple but vital decision. It is a decision that will steer the future course of our country and our Congress—and particularly the Senate.

With this vote, Senators will decide whether their allegiance is to President Obama and his agenda, Majority Leader REID and the open borders lobby, or whether their allegiance is to the American worker, the constitutional order, the American people, and this Nation's sovereign laws.

The choice could not be more clear. Do we as a Nation have the right to control our borders? Do we? That is the question every Senator will be answering today.

President Obama has announced to the entire world that he will implement a sweeping unilateral Executive amnesty—only after the midterm elections, not before, as he promised, because there is concern among his Members that it wouldn't be politically popular. This amnesty by Executive order will give work permits—contrary to law—and Social Security numbers—contrary to law—to as many as 5 to 6 million people, the White House tells us, to people who are here illegally, illegally entered the United States, illegally overstayed their visas or defrauded U.S. immigration authorities.

With a casual stroke of a pen, the President is preparing to nullify the immigration laws of the United States. He is preparing to wipe away the lawful protections which every American worker in this country is entitled to. He is preparing to assume for himself—himself alone—the absolute power to decide who can enter our country, who can work in our country, who can live in our country by the millions, regardless of what the law says, what the citizenry says, and what the Constitution says. These immigration rules—who can come, work, and live in the country—are the bedrock of any Nation's immigration laws and sovereignty. The President has already erased much of these rules—erased them. And his planned Executive action would remove much of what remains of them. It would establish for people all over the world the principle that if you can get into America, you can stay in America, and work in America.

Let's consider the current state of immigration enforcement. Immigration officers already tell us—people who do this every day—that they have been barred from fulfilling their oaths to follow the law. They filed a lawsuit claiming they were required to violate their oath. The president of the ICE officers' council warned: ''ICE agents''—Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers—''are now prohibited from arresting illegal aliens solely on the charges of illegal entry or visa overstay—the two most frequently violated sections of immigration law.''

The policies of this administration represent an open invitation to millions who enter the United States on visas each year. People come lawfully on visas for certain periods of time. It encourages them to unlawfully overstay. And why not? If no one is going to deport you, why would you return if you choose not to return to your home country?

And what about the border? We know from the substantial influx of illegal immigrants from Central America that all you have to do is show up at the border, demand entry, and you will likely be released into the United States. You may be asked to return for some sort of hearing in the future. But people are not tracked as to where they will go and not one of those people will be looked for if they fail to show up. That is not happening anywhere in the system.

Consider this recent report from the Associated Press: ''As of early September, only 319 of the more than 59,000 immigrants who were caught traveling with their families have been returned to Central America.'' That means that more than 99 percent of those apprehended with their families have so far been allowed to stay. That is in addition to the tens of thousands who have entered without their families and who have been promptly released also into the United States on some sort of bond or promise to show up for court, and many adults from Central America who have been released as well.

As President Obama's former ICE Director, John Sandweg, explained: ''If you are a run-of-the-mill immigrant here illegally, your odds of getting deported are near zero.''

And who picks up the tab? Local school districts, local police departments, local taxpayers.

No nation can have a policy where people can simply show up at the border and demand to be released into the country, especially since the policy is never to seek to apprehend persons who don't show up so they can be deported. But that is what is happening right now under the policies of this administration. It simply is. The American people need to understand that. They need to know more fully how serious this situation is.

The American people are beginning to understand that these policies represent in truth a collapse of immigration enforcement.

What about our asylum system? Here is what the House Judiciary Committee reports on asylum, which is when we accept people from around the globe who are subjected to serious oppression.

> Asylum approval rates overall have increased dramatically in recent years. The vast majority of aliens who affirmatively seek asylum are now successful in their claims. At the same time, an internal Department of Homeland Security report shows that at least 70 percent of asylum cases contain proven or possible fraud.

Seventy percent contain proven or possible fraud. Still they are being approved overwhelmingly for entry, and once approved for asylum, they are entitled to all social welfare benefits.

What about our visa screening process, the people who come on visas? Here is what Kenneth Palinkas had to say on that. Mr. Palinkas is the president of the National Citizenship and Immigration Services Council, representing 12,000 immigration caseworkers and adjudications officers at the USCIS. Here is just a fraction of his dramatic report delineating and detailing the problems they are facing today.

> USCIS adjudications officers are pressured to rubber stamp applications instead of conducting diligent case reviews and investigations. The culture at USCIS encourages all applications to be approved, discouraging proper investigation into red flags and discouraging the denial of any application. USCIS has been turned into an ''approval machine.''

This is the man who represents the officers doing this everyday, and what he says is true.

He goes on to say in this letter: ''The attitude of USCIS management is not that the Agency serves the American public or the laws of the United States, or public safety and national security, but instead that the Agency serves the illegal aliens and the attorneys which represent them.''

Surely this cannot be what is happening in our legal system.

He goes on to say this:

> Large swaths of the Immigration and Nationality Act are not effectively enforced for illegal immigrants and visa holders, including laws regarding public charges as well as many other provisions, as USCIS lacks the resources to adequately screen and scrutinize legal immigrants and non-immigrants seeking status adjustment. There is also insufficient screening and monitoring of student visas.

So the contention that this administration is deporting record numbers of illegal aliens is plainly false. Removals have dropped dramatically.

Now consider what will happen to our system if the President goes through with his plan that he has announced after the election to provide unilateral Executive amnesty by Executive order to illegal workers and visa violators here today. What immigration law will be left after that?

The government is not enforcing the law with respect to visa overstays, illegal entry, illegal work, asylum fraud, document fraud, workplace fraud, and on and on and on. We ignore immigration law for young people, for older people who came with younger people, for the parents of older people who came as younger people, for people with relatives, for people traveling alone, for people traveling with families, for people who entered before a certain date, for people who entered after a certain date, people who entered through an airport or seaport, for people who do show up in court, for people who don't show up in court. We have made a million excuses for not enforcing the law.

And when millions more enter illegally asking for their amnesty in the future, asking for their amnesty now that others got before them, will the President print work permits for them, too? What moral basis will remain to deny future unlawful immigrants work authorizations, jobs, and amnesty in the future?

I am sure this will make the activists, the politicians and certain billionaire executives who enjoy dinner parties at the White House, very happy that the President is doing these things. But what about what is good for America? What about what is in the interest of the American people? America is not an oligarchy. The masters of the universe don't get to meet at the White House and decide how to run this country.

When the American people learned what was in the Senate amnesty and guest worker bill that doubled the number of guest workers for which every single Senate Democrat voted, the people said no, no, no, and the House stopped the plan. But now the same groups that wrote this bill are working with the White House to extract the same benefits by Executive fiat, by Executive order. They had at least 20 secret meetings in July and August alone with the White House to plan this strategy. These measures, we are informed, would include a massive expansion in the admission of new foreign workers, including more workers for information technology giants who are laying off Americans, in fact, more than they are hiring. We learned from Rutgers Professor Hal Salzman that two-thirds of all new IT jobs are now already being filled by foreign guest workers. Can you imagine that? We are turning out thousands of IT graduates, but two-thirds of the jobs are being filled by foreign workers, and wages are falling.

Americans wish to see record immigration levels—these high lawful levels of immigration that we have—reduced, not increased, by actually a 3-to-1 margin. But the proposal they are pushing and advocating would double the number of lawful workers while not dealing effectively with the unlawful flow.

Yet Senate Democrats are colluding with the White House to support the surge of these numbers. Studies show wage declines among all wage earners since 2009. There is a wage decline among all American workers. Wages have fallen since 2009, but the declines on a percentage basis are the greatest for our lower income workers. The people having the hardest time getting by have received the biggest percentage drop. Does this not concern our leaders? Has no one paid any attention to this fact?

So far our Senate Democratic Caucus has enabled the administration's lawless scheme every step of the way. Not one Senate Democrat has supported the House plan that would stop this Executive amnesty.

The House-passed legislation would stop it. It is waiting on the floor of the Senate to be called up for a vote. Not one Member of the Democratic leadership has even demanded that Mr. REID bring it up for a vote. Not one has pledged to stay here in Washington every day until this Executive amnesty is stopped.

But it is not too late. We are going to have a vote soon.

Where is the courage? Where is the independence that Senators should show? Where is the willingness to stand up to the political class, the lobbyists, the party bosses, the elite set in the Nation's Capital, and to stand by the side of the American people—indeed, to defend the institutional powers of Congress which alone has the power to make law, not the President. He cannot make law. He cannot give someone the right to work in America when the law says they are not able to work if they entered the country unlawfully. Until that happens, I have to say that every Senate Democrat is the President's partner in this scheme as surely as if they wrote the Executive orders themselves and as surely as if they were sitting right next to the interest groups huddling with White House aides to craft these orders.

So I have a message today for all the special interests, the globalist elites, the activists, and the cynical, vote-counting political plotters who are meeting in secret at the White House, and the message is this: You don't get to sit in a room and rewrite the laws of the United States of America. No, sir. Congress writes the laws. You may not be used to people telling you no, but I am telling you no today.

It is critical that our Senate Democrats be willing to say no today when we vote.

I also have a message for the American people: You have been right from the beginning. You have justly demanded that our borders be controlled, our laws enforced, and that at long last immigration policy serve the needs of our own people first. For this virtuous and legitimate demand, you have been demeaned, even scorned by the governing class, the cosmopolitan elites. They know so much. They want you to believe that your concerns are somehow illegitimate, that you are wrong for being worried about your jobs or your schools or your hospitals or your communities or your national security.

These elite citizens of the world speak often of their concern about people living in poverty overseas. Yet they turn a blind eye to the poverty and suffering in their own country. They don't want you to speak up either. They don't want you to be heard. They don't want you to feel you have a voice. But you do have a voice, American people, and your message is being heard. I am delivering that message to the Senate today.

This is a moment of choosing for every Senator. Where will history record that you stood in the face of the President's promise to unlawfully nullify immigration law in America?

There will be a motion made soon that will allow the Senate to block the President's planned Executive amnesty. This is simply to pass the legislation the House has already passed. This is a commonsense Senate action.

If you believe we are a sovereign nation with a right to control our borders—and don't we have that right?—then you must vote yes. Let's bring it up before this unlawful Executive order for amnesty occurs.

If you go along with the idea that America is an oligarchy run by a group of special interests meeting at the White House to rewrite the immigration laws of America, then vote no.

The Nation is watching today. This is an issue of extreme importance for the American people and for the rule of law. Will you at long last break from your majority leader, Democratic colleagues, or will you once again surrender your vote to Mr. REID and the groups meeting in secret at the White House to thereby enable their lawless actions?

In its almost 2 years of existence—this Congress that has been in existence here going on 2 years now has failed to pass a single appropriations bill on time, and now we are facing another CR. Pass everything—one vote to fund the entire government and not a single amendment is being allowed.

This Senate has violated the laws that limited spending that we voted for and spent more than allowed. It has blocked amendments to such a degree that the entire heritage of free debate and free rights to amend laws has been violated and damaged substantially in this Senate.

If we leave town without having passed a bill to block this Executive amnesty, then it will be a permanent stain on the Senate, the constitutional order, and this entire Democratic caucus.

I know the pressure is to stay hitched and stay in line, but Senate Democrats do have the power to vote differently. Senator MANCHIN voted differently last time, and others can also. It is time to stand up and be counted for the working people in this country and enact legislation in their interest.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Does the Senator from Texas wish to speak?

Mr. CRUZ. I intend to, yes.

Ms. MIKULSKI. The Senator from Alabama finished his speech and didn't suggest the absence of a quorum, so I was going to speak. But since the Senator from Texas has been waiting, please go ahead and proceed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, we have a crisis in this country. We have a crisis at our southern border that is producing some 90,000 unaccompanied children coming into this country. These kids are being victimized. These kids are being physically and sexually abused by violent coyotes and drug cartels.

The American people understand we have a crisis, and the American people want action. The House of Representatives understands we have a crisis. The House of Representatives has acted. Yet I am sorry to say the majority leader and the Democrats in this body refuse to allow any action to address this crisis.

The crisis at the border is the direct consequence of President Obama's lawlessness. Just 3 years ago, in 2011, there were roughly 6,000 unaccompanied kids coming into this country, and then in 2012, a few months before the election, President Obama unilaterally granted amnesty to some 800,000 people who entered the country illegally as children. The predicted consequence is that if

you grant amnesty to those who enter illegally as children, it creates an enormous incentive for more and more children to enter illegally. As a result, we have seen the numbers go from 6,000 unaccompanied kids 3 years ago to approximately 90,000 this year, and next year, the Department of Homeland Security predicts, there will be 145,000 little boys and little girls illegally smuggled, victimized, and brutalized.

This needs to stop. We need leadership in Washington. We need leadership in both Houses of Congress. We need leadership from both Republicans and Democrats. Yet not only do President Obama and the Senate Democrats refuse to do anything to solve this problem, but, I am sorry to say, it is even worse.

In recent weeks President Obama told the American people he intends to grant even more amnesty. The first illegal amnesty of some 800,000 people was not enough, so in his view we need more. He intends to illegally grant amnesty to 5 or 6 million more people. Mark my words: The President of the United States intends to illegally grant amnesty. Amnesty is coming. Yet we heard in recent days that the President has decided to delay that action until just after the election.

There are a lot of cynical policies in Washington, DC. Yet this has to rank very near the top. For the President of the United States to say he understands the American people don't want amnesty, but since there is an election coming up, he intends to pass the policy which they don't want, don't believe in, and which subverts the rule of law just after the election so that the Senate Democrats can campaign and say they had nothing to do with it—what does that say about what the President thinks about the American people? That he thinks they are not paying close enough attention to understand that this election is a referendum on amnesty? That he thinks they won't remember by the time the next election happens?

Well, here is the bottom line: Amnesty is the wrong approach that created the crisis. The only way to solve this crisis and protect and prevent those little boys and little girls from being physically and sexually abused is to end President Obama's amnesty and prospectively stop the promise of amnesty that is causing these kids to come here illegally.

I introduced legislation in the Senate to do exactly that, and the House of Representatives, to their credit, stood up and led. They stayed in session an extra day before the August recess to come together and pass the legislation I had introduced in the Senate. They passed it by a vote of 216 to 192, with 4 Democrats joining the Republicans to stop President Obama's amnesty in order to actually solve the crisis at the border. Yet what happened in the Senate? In the Senate the majority leader refused to allow a vote on the provision and sent the Senators home for August while doing nothing to address the problem.

The reason is simple: Although President Obama and Senate Democrats are afraid of the voters holding them accountable for amnesty, it should be lost on nobody watching that what is happening in the Senate is that the 55 Senate Democrats serving in this body affirmatively want amnesty.

If only this body would just do its job. If we would simply pass the legislation the House has already passed, prospectively taking amnesty off the table—and by the way, this bill does nothing, zero, to the so-called DREAMers who are already here. It doesn't address that issue. This issue addresses the promise of amnesty in the future. As long as these children believe they will get amnesty, they will keep coming here illegally. They will keep being victimized and abused.

Unfortunately, the majority leader has employed a procedural trick called filling the tree. It is a trick this body is now quite familiar with because it is what the majority leader has done over and over to shut down every single amendment from every Member of this body.

To be fair, majority leaders in both parties have used this trick in the past. The previous six majority leaders used the procedural trick of filling the tree a total of 40 times. The current Democratic majority leader has used it almost 90 times since 2006. The current majority leader has used it more than double what his six previous predecessors did. Roughly two-thirds of the time this procedural trick has been employed, it has been by the majority leader of this body.

What does that do? What that does is it says legislation in this body will shut down the right of amendments for every Senator. What it says to the 26 million Texans is that their views don't matter because neither Senator CORNYN nor I will be allowed to offer any amendments. It says to the citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the State of Maryland, the States of New York and California: Your views don't matter. Why? Because the majority leader has stripped your Senators of the right to offer any amendment on any topic whatsoever.

The majority leader has done that nearly 90 times—including on this continuing resolution, including on the basic bill that funds the government because the Senate has failed to appropriate the funds that we should be doing otherwise.

This is wrong. It is fundamentally wrong. The American people deserve a vote. If Senate Democrats want to embrace amnesty, let them do so openly and in daylight. Stop hiding. People are frustrated with Washington because they recognize politicians say one thing here and one thing at home. How many Senate Democrats, particularly in red States, go home to their States and say amnesty is a terrible thing and then come back here and facilitate the President illegally granting amnesty. How about we have some honesty. How about we have elected Members of this body say and do the same in Washington that they say and do back home. Don't hide. How about we all tell the truth. And the truth is the 55 Senate Democrats want amnesty, but they don't want the voters to know. They are celebrating that President Obama has said: Fear not, the amnesty is coming, but we will wait until after the election. That cynicism is fundamentally inconsistent with the obligation every Member of this body owes to our constituents.

So I am pleased we will get a vote—despite the majority leader's best efforts—on amnesty, because momentarily this body is going to have the opportunity to vote, and I predict most, if not all, Senate Democrats will vote in favor of President Obama's amnesty.

I have a lot higher opinion of the American people, of the voters, than it seems the President does. I think the American people understand what is going on and I don't think they are going to be fooled by the President delaying his illegal amnesty until after the election. So we are going to get a vote on this matter.

AMENDMENT NO. 3852

For that reason, I move to table Reid amendment No. 3852 for the purposes of offering the Cruz-Sessions amendment No. 3859, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mr. CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXECUTIVE AMNESTY

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, the solution to this immediate crisis along our Nation's border and our longer term immigration needs necessarily need to begin with the President finally enforcing the law—that set of laws already on the books. There is no amount of money Congress can spend, there is no new law that could solve this crisis, if the President and the leadership of his party continue down their lawless path.

There are several steps the President can take—and he can take those steps immediately—that do not require any action by Congress or another dime from the American people. The most important action he could take would be to stop abusing his ''prosecutorial discretion'' and end the DACA Program which provides administrative amnesty and work permits to those who have

entered the United States illegally as minors. He also needs to resist the temptation to further expand DACA to millions of additional adults and send a strong message to respond quickly by returning those who enter the United States illegally back to their home countries.

By announcing to the world that he will not enforce our Nation's laws by requiring the Department of Homeland Security to process and return those who have already come here unlawfully, the President of the United States is encouraging hundreds of thousands of children and adults to make a very dangerous journey to the United States illegally. He is encouraging families to pay coyotes controlled by drug cartels thousands of dollars to smuggle their children into this country. That is truly the humanitarian crisis we now face.

This continuing resolution—the continuing resolution now before the Senate—provides funds for the DACA Program and any other Executive amnesty the President may choose to implement illegally.

I, along with my friends and colleagues from Alabama and from Texas, wish to offer an amendment prohibiting funding to process prospective applications, but the majority has objected, so we will attempt to table the Reid amendment in order to allow that vote.

The President's threat to widen the scope of DACA is only going to make matters worse—matters in this pronounced humanitarian crisis we are facing along our border—which is why I agree with my friends, Senators SESSIONS and CRUZ, that, at the very least, we must take steps to prevent the President from providing any more executive amnesty.

ISIS

Now I wish to speak about some other issues related to the continuing resolution and, in so doing, I wish to point out that one of the most important and solemn duties we have as Members of the Senate is to authorize the use of military force and ask the brave men and women in our armed services to put their lives in harm's way. It is, I believe, a gross dereliction of that duty, and an insult to those same men and women, to tack on a military authorization to this must-pass spending bill just so Members of Congress can hurry back to their home States. If the United States is going to escalate our involvement in a brutal conflict overseas, if we are going to send American troops to harm and train Syrian rebels for their fight against ISIS, we need to debate that decision on its own merits and not take this up simply as a condition of providing ongoing funding for the Federal Government as a whole. That is the only way for this issue to receive the kind of careful attention and robust debate it truly deserves. We owe it to our men and women in uniform to separate any military authorization from this must-pass spending bill to keep the government funded. If that means we do not get home early, so be it. The lives of our troops, the lives of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, and those who support them, and the security of the United States are simply far too important.

I believe, as does the President of the United States, that ISIS is a threat to the Middle East and will take any opportunity it gets to kill Americans. Many of its fighters carry European and even American passports which will offer them easier access to the United States. Tracking and stopping these foreign fighters must be a high priority for the President and for the Congress, and our allies must work to stop the flow of these fighters into and out of the conflict zone half a world away. We must attack their finances, their abilities to communicate and coordinate and access weapons and supplies. The United States can and should act to protect ourselves from this threat.

There is a clearly defined constitutional process for doing that—a process which involves the participation of the President as the Commander in Chief and Members of Congress as representatives of the American people invested with the power to declare war. But are we following that clearly defined process? Are we adhering to this prudent set of procedures we are supposed to follow under our now 227-year-old governing document? No. Instead, we are openly flouting it. Instead, we are considering an authorization of military force almost as an afterthought. We are doing so by attaching it to a continuing resolution which itself reduces, in a very shameless and disgraceful way, Congress's spending authority to another afterthought. Why? Well, because, as far as I can tell, some in Congress want to go home early. They are so anxious to get to their next recess, to get back to their home State, that they are willing to give inadequate attention to this very serious problem that affects every American, that has implications not only for national security but for the security of 300 million Americans. It has especially grave implications for the brave men and women who wear our uniforms, whose lives would be on the line as a result of decisions made in connection with this effort.

This is shameful and it is unconscionable. It is an insult to the men and women we serve, and it is an insult to the men and women who wear uniforms and serve us well.

We should strike this section to arm and train Syrian rebels from the continuing resolution and instead have full debate and a separate vote on authorizing the President's strategy to address the ISIS threat. Forcing an authorization for our military to act in any manner through a continuing resolution up against a government shutdown does not meet the standards for this process and it does not afford the American people, many of whom are servicemembers, a voice regarding our Nation's most important affairs. We have ample reason to take the needed time to consider this decision on its own merits and not on the merits of a continuing resolution to keep the government funded.

The idea of arming Syrian rebels has drawn serious concern from Members of the Senate on both sides of the aisle but, so far, only Members from certain key committees have been able to debate and discuss openly and in an official Senate forum the specifics of the President's plan. And even those of us who sit on those committees are still in need of much more information. I have had concerns for the past year as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee with the proposed tactic of arming the Syrian rebels after hearing testimony from our own intelligence and defense leaders that what we refer to as the ''moderate rebels'' are, in fact, fragmented and decentralized. Their memberships are fluid and often lacking in common goals, leadership, and levels of moderation.

This is borne out in press reports from the region almost weekly. In fact, a few months ago I asked General Austin, the commander of CENTCOM, if the United States would guarantee that the assistance we are supplying to moderates in Syria—the then-nonlethal aid—is not being used by or to the benefit of extremist groups that want to attack the United States.

His answer was:

> No, we cannot guarantee the assistance we provide doesn't fall into the wrong hands. Undoubtedly, some weapons and funds flowing into Syria wind up in the hands of extremists . . . . The extremists work closely with all factions of the opposition and is often aware of the logistics and humanitarian shipments into Syria. At times, they even acquire and disseminate these shipments to the local populace. This, in turn, benefits in the propaganda war.

That is probably why hardly a month ago—just a little over a month ago—President Obama called the idea of arming Syrian rebels a ''fantasy''—a fantasy that was, as he put it, ''never in the cards.'' Now he is seeking authorization for it. In less than a month, what was once a fantasy is now apparently the strategy. What was never in the cards is now not only in the cards but is a card that he is actually playing—and doing so as an afterthought, thrown on to a must-pass bill with an entirely different purpose and function.

On Tuesday in the Armed Services Committee hearing, when I asked Secretary Hagel why the President changed his mind on arming and training Syrian rebels, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel could not provide an explanation. This is troubling, to say the least. If there has been some change over the last month in national security threats or the capabilities and composition of a Syrian opposition group, why has the President not shared this with our Secretary of Defense? Or if there hasn't been a change,

then is there some reason other than American national security that may have caused the President to reverse course. The American people deserve answers to these and other related questions.

Another important issue that deserves full and open debate is that this is about more than just arming rebels to fight terrorists. It became clear through answers from administration officials in our Senate Armed Services hearing Tuesday that the Administration believes that a new government and political structure in Syria is needed for these rebel groups to be successful.

No one doubts that President Assad is a tyrant, one who has exacted terrible measures on his very own citizens, but our constituents need to understand—I want to be very clear here—that the idea of arming Syrian rebels to fight ISIS and Assad, while also standing up and supporting a new government in Syria, is more like a long-term nation-building mission than a counterterrorism mission.

The administration has not been clear on this point. If we are indeed taking steps towards a nation-building exercise in Syria, we must also debate both the financial and the tremendous human costs of such an endeavor.

The ISIS threat to the United States is serious. Our response should be given equally serious consideration here in the Senate. When my colleague on the Armed Services Committee, Senator FISCHER from Nebraska, mentioned how important she thought it was that this authorization be separate from the CR, Secretary Hagel stated that he agreed that it should have a ''more thorough airing with the American people,'' but that it couldn't receive such an airing because Congress was rushing home for a recess. This is not good enough for the Senate.

This is not good enough for the United States or for the American people. It is shameful. Our constituents expect us to do our jobs. If that means staying here a few more weeks, so be it. If that means staying here for a month or two months—however long it takes—then so be it.

If this plan is the right one, fine; if we need to adjust it or reject it, fine; but there is no such thing as a must-pass vote of conscience—not here, not on this topic. The American people deserve to have a debate about how and why we are sending their sons and daughters into danger. We should not set this precedent of sending Americans into harm's way as an afterthought, on our way out of town, like some kind of political out-of-office reply email. Congress used to be better than this, and I submit the American people still are.

I respectfully and strongly urge my colleagues to pull this section from the CR and have a full debate to give authorization for the President's actions in the Middle East. To this end, I am proposing we remove this language from the continuing resolution so that it may be considered separately and adequately.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Accordingly, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order for me to offer my amendment No. 3845.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Ms. MIKULSKI: I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I have heard a good part of the afternoon: Why can't we stay and debate this, and so on? I don't minimize the seriousness of the issues, whether they are about arming Syrian rebels, the potential for new kinds of military action, certainly the ongoing saga in Ukraine or also what is going on in our own country. Students are not being able to afford college, families are not being able to afford to buy a home, and work is not worth it because wages are frozen. We are pushing people to a standard of living less than what they had.

The people of the middle class are fighting hand-to-hand to stay middle class. Those who might want to get there are seeing the opportunity ladder sawed down. When we wanted to bring bills to the floor in a regular order and bring up regular appropriations that had both money and policy where people could have debated them in an orderly way, we had cluster bombs of parliamentary procedure thrown on where people hid behind votes on motions to proceed.

Some of the biggest critics today saying, why don't we stay here and debate, have been some of the biggest obstacles in insisting on bringing bills up in regular order. So here we are today in the closing hours of the CR. We have had much enlightened conversation that was actually to hear leaders talk about this and differences of opinions in the most civil way, with intellectual rigor and firmness of conviction.

That is what we should be doing. I would like to do more of it. This is why we need to reform ourselves. We like to talk a lot about reforming the country, changing Barack Obama, but we need to reform ourselves. We need to stop hiding behind cloture votes and motions to proceed, where you need 60 votes to just barely come up and salute the flag. So I am not going to go into this today, but I think we need to go into this. We need to take a look at ourselves and examine ourselves—how we can keep the traditions the same, protect the rights of the minority. But when all is said and done, the American people are fed up that more gets said than done and more gets said about saying things, and so on.

I am telling you, as I travel in Maryland, my constituents feel Washington means less and less relevance to them. They are also wondering: What is it that you do to get things done? They are asking these questions. You know what, they ought to ask these questions.

I am not going to take up the time. I know that other colleagues are coming to speak on the floor.

This whole thing about we have to stay and we have to do it—we have to do our business during the whole year. We can't do it in the last 3 hours, coming up on the crunch of the end of the fiscal year. All year long we have an opportunity to debate. All year long we have the opportunity to debate issues in our committee process and on the floor. I feel pretty strongly about this.

I hope that others who feel strongly, too, join a reform effort so we can honor the traditions of the Senate and protect the rights of the minority. But, hey, let's get back to the majority rules, regular order, and a debate that occurs all year long on issues and not just in a crisis environment.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Executive Calendar consent agreed to Wednesday, September 17, 2014, be modified to include Executive Calendar No. 925 following 1031, with all other provisions of the previous order remaining in effect.

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

The nomination considered and confirmed is as follows:

UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Alfonso E. Lenhardt, of New York, to be Deputy Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

Ms. MIKULSKI: Mr. President, what that means is that we have now confirmed Alfonso E. Lenhardt to be the Deputy Administrator of USAID.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I come first to support the distinguished chair of the Appropriations Committee in her endeavor to pass a continuing resolution. I, specifically, want to speak to support the President's request for authorization to stand up a title 10 overt, train and equip mission for vetted moderate Syrian opposition. The hearing I held yesterday in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee laid out specifics of how the President is moving forward in building the anti-ISIL coalition.

We will undertake targeted airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq and Syria. We will train and equip a Syrian opposition force committed to a pluralistic, free Syria.

This is a multifaceted plan, and we heard both from Secretary Kerry and a second panel of regional experts that coalition partners are ready to contribute in real terms and not just empty words.

The ISIL threat is grave and it is urgent. We must stand with our partners in the region to confront this barbarism in the interests of all of the individuals being brutalized by ISIL but also because regional stability and U.S. Security demand it.

Training and equipping a fighting Syrian force is one urgent element in the broader plan.

We in the Senate must provide this authority, as our colleagues in the House did yesterday. In Iraq we have the Iraqi security forces and Kurdish Peshmerga forces committed to combating ISIL and partnering with us to do so. At this point in time we do not have such a force to partner with inside of Syria.

Let's be clear-eyed about what this challenge is. It is messy and complicated and not at all easy. There is no silver bullet. But without a trained, equipped, and capable moderate opposition force to fill the void, as we conduct airstrikes against ISIL, we would essentially be opening the door to Assad and his Russian- and Iranian-backed regime forces to regain lost territory.

Imagine how our adversaries will celebrate if we fail to build a force that is equipped, trained, and committed to defeating the barbarism of ISIL and Assad.

The administration was posed with the question yesterday: Why now? Why train these forces now, 4 years into this civil war?

There are several answers:

First, we have been working with these moderate armed groups for over 2 years now. We know them.

Second, there is no real alternative to building a local opposition force to take the fight on in Syria unless you are talking about American boots on the ground. That is not in play here.

Third, the region is standing with us in training and creating the ability to assist these Syrian rebels. It is truly a remarkable development that Saudi Arabia, for example, is willing to publicly discuss its support and publicly disclose that it will host and contribute to our train-and-equip mission. Other gulf countries are willing to fund this mission and help with recruiting efforts. No longer are our partners willing to quietly support from the shadows. They view the threat coming from Iraq and Syria with ISIL with such urgency that they are going public loudly and assertively.

I am clear-eyed about the enormity of the challenge. There is risk. But at this point, given the rapidity of ISIL's advance and the savagery of its actions, we must be willing to take some risk to degrade this brutal, barbaric organization. The fact is that Sunni neighbors across the region are lining up to join this mission.

The moderate Syrian forces we will train can pressure ISIL in Syria, the Iraqis from Iraq, and we pressure ISIL from the air. The question is, Why now? The response to the question is this: Yesterday I held—as the Presiding Officer knows, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed legislation last year to increase lethal assistance to the moderate rebels battling Assad in a bipartisan way. We do not get do-overs, so we cannot change what was not done. We cannot change what has already happened. But we can change what exists on the ground in Syria today. We can influence what happens going forward and work together to set conditions for how it ends.

Yesterday Robert Ford—our exceptional former U.S. Ambassador to Syria, probably our greatest expert on Syria and the rebels particularly, and until recently our senior State Department official working with the moderate opposition—could not have had more compelling testimony. In response to questions I posed to him about whether a moderate armed opposition still exists for us to train and arm, he said: Yes, they exist. Yes, they are already fighting ISIL. Yes, they share our view that a radical, extremist Islamic State should not be imposed on Syria. That conflict will only end with a political deal or negotiated settlement.

In response to questions about whether there is recruitment potential, whether we can find enough fighters who are moderate who will pass our vetting standards to receive our training, he said: Yes. We know them. We have provided them with nonlethal assistance, which they have used responsibly.

By the way, he described them as being pretty resilient in the face of being outgunned, that they are still engaged and fighting for their own future.

He also said: We have talked politics with them, meaning understanding where their mindset is as it relates to the future.

In fact, Mr. Ford said that the problem has always been that there were more willing fighters than there were guns and ammunition.

In response to whether the moderate armed Syrian opposition shares our goal of degrading ISIL, the answer was also affirmatively yes.

The force we train and arm will fight ISIL because ISIL is threatening their supply lines and has butchered hundreds of members of the moderate Syrian opposition. In Syria, the moderate opposition has been mired in a two-front war—one against ISIL and the other against Assad and his regime backers—for years. The language in the amendment to the CR reflects this reality. We are training and arming a force that will defend the Syrian people from ISIL attacks and also promote conditions for a negotiated settlement to end the conflict in Syria—in other words, going after Assad's security forces.

Finally, Ambassador Ford lamented that if we do not go forward with this proposal to train and equip the moderate armed opposition, Assad will likely become even more convinced that his strategy all along has worked. His strategy is to convince the world that he is the only viable alternative to ISIL and radical extremists and that we will eventually resolve ourselves to working with him.

Let me conclude by saying that the only course of action at this point in time is for us to commit to the grinding work of building a viable alternative, which is the moderate armed Syrian opposition.

Again, this is not going to happen overnight, but it certainly will not happen if there is not a moderate, capable alternative to Assad, a group that is neither radical nor has the barbarism of ISIL, nor the nihilistic, barrel bomb-dropping of Assad.

We must be realistic if we are going to degrade and destroy ISIL. Frankly, I still have many questions about the way forward beyond this issue. I intend to work with the administration to ensure that the plan is sound and the strategy is effective. We will continue to vet that through a series of both hearings and intelligence briefings. But I have no question that this particular action is needed now.

I fully intend for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to explore, vet, and ultimately craft what a possible authorization for use of military force should look like. In that regard, we need to get it right, not just do it fast. I do not want an AUMF that ultimately—as of September 2001—finds us 13 years later in a host of different countries that were never envisioned as being the authorization for it, to send the sons and daughters of America without the authorization of the Congress.

We will work on all of that in a determined, studious, and detailed way to make sure that we understand the strategy and all of its dimensions, that we can provide for that, and at the end of the day that we can defeat ISIL, but without an open-ended check.

With that, I urge support for the CR.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I wish to express my disappointment about a matter of great importance to Wyoming and many other Western States. The continuing resolution before us does not include critical funding that nearly 1,900 counties in 49 States rely on.

Local governments are responsible for providing fire protection, law enforcement, sanitation, public health, and education, to our constituents. They provide these services largely by raising local revenue, including property taxes. In States where there is little federally owned land, local communities have a large number of private homeowners to help provide these services. But in States such as my home State of Wyoming, the Federal Government owns much of the land. The problem is that these Federal lands cannot be taxed. The Payment in Lieu of Taxes program, or PILT, has been in place for decades and is, essentially, the Federal Government's property taxes.

Last year's omnibus appropriations package did not fund PILT. Instead, the Farm bill provided 1 year of PILT funding. And since Congress has not

passed appropriations bills through regular order this year but is leaving fiscal year 2014 funding on autopilot, PILT isn't addressed in the legislation we are considering today. Yet local governments must still provide critical fire, law enforcement, and health services in these areas and for the people who work on them. What are we supposed to tell our communities that rely on this money for 40 to 80 percent of their budgets?

This body cannot fail to address this issue this year. To do so would break a promise we have made and would force communities to reduce or even eliminate the vital resources upon which their citizens rely. But we should not just address the issue for this year. We need to stop playing games with PILT and find a way to ensure it is adequately and fairly funded for years to come in a way that does not rob Peter to pay Paul.

Yes, the Federal Government is out of money. We are going to have to prioritize. But I would submit that PILT needs to be one of those priorities. PILT represents a promise the Federal Government made to counties and local governments all across the Nation, and they are looking to us to see how we will keep that promise. If we fail to do so, it will have an impact on almost every one of our States.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to express support for the continuing resolution which funds the government through December 11.

One provision in the bill I would like to focus on relates to our fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL.

I believe there is an urgent need to confront this terrorist group, and Congress can help this effort by supporting President Obama's plan and voting for the continuing resolution.

The CR includes a provision to provide the Defense Department with the authority for the U.S. Armed Forces to train and equip an opposition force capable of confronting ISIL.

I believe we must come together in large numbers—Democrats and Republicans—to pass this provision as quickly as possible. A strong bipartisan majority would give the Obama administration and the American people a strong sense of unity and purpose as we all grapple with the threat of ISIL. We must give the President the tools he needs to succeed. Providing the Defense Department with this authority is just one part of the comprehensive strategy, but it is an important one.

The President has said he has the legal authority to conduct airstrikes in Iraq and Syria and has laid out his strategy. After the election there will be ample time to debate the strategy further and potentially vote on a new authorization of military force, but in the short-term we must pass this authorization—at this time the only authority the administration has asked Congress to approve. If ever there were a time to unite behind President Obama, that time is now.

ISIL is like no other terrorist organization we have seen. It has become a ruthless terrorist army that occupies territory and controls civilian populations through fear, intimidation, and brutality.

It controls large swaths of land in two nations. In Syria it controls nearly one-third of the country, and in Iraq it effectively controls as many as 14 cities.

According to a recent CIA estimate, ISIL may have as many as 30,000 fighters—and separately there may be up to 25,000 Sunni tribesmen who have associated themselves with ISIL forces.

ISIL has looted heavy weaponry—including artillery, tanks and armored vehicles—from the battlefield. Much of that equipment is now being used against innocent civilians and our partners on the ground. ISIL has killed tens of thousands of people. They kill with abandon, including the brutal massacre of hundreds of Iraqi and Syrian soldiers, stripped, bound and buried in shallow graves. ISIL is also well-funded through criminality, ransom payments, extortion and the sale of oil. Its control of territory and resources is topped only by its level of brutality.

Over the past few weeks, I have personally reviewed photos, videos and personal stories of ISIL's countless victims. I have seen the beheading of American and British hostages and pictures of the crucifixion of many innocent civilians, including a girl as young as 6 years of age. I have seen photos of heads staked on fence posts and films of the mass-execution of Iraqi and Syrian army units. In one gory report, after ISIL took control of two oilfields in eastern Syria from the al-Sheitaat tribe, they summarily executed 700 tribesmen. I have read stories of women bound to trees and forced to be sexual prizes for ISIL fighters who performed well in battle. There are reports that thousands of Yazidi women have been taken as slaves and I have read the testimonials of the few who were lucky enough to escape. They describe being confined, eating only once a day, being given away as wives, raped and abused at the hands of ISIL fighters. I have seen devastating footage of Yazidis and Christians literally running for their lives from approaching ISIL forces, faced with the choice of converting to Islam or death. When one Yazidi girl was surrounded by ISIL fighters, she said, ''I've never felt so helpless in my 14 years. They had blocked our path to safety, and there was nothing we could do.''

The lack of humanity is shocking and despicable. It is pure evil and it should haunt the world. And while ISIL is now limited to Syria and Iraq, it has made clear its intentions are to bring the fight to the United States and our allies.

In Iraq, a major concern of mine is that their next attack will be our Embassy in Baghdad. I have no doubt that ISIL leaders also intend to hit us here in our homeland.

In July 2012, ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi said: ''The mujahidin have also sworn they will make you suffer more pain than that caused by Usama [bin Laden]. You will see them in your own country, God willing.''

In January of this year, during his radio address, Baghdadi added: ''Our last message is to the Americans. Soon we'll be in direct confrontation, and the sons of Islam have prepared for such a day. So watch out for us, for we are with you, watching.''

Finally, in a video posted on August 19, 2014, the executioner of James Foley stated: ''So any attempt by you, Obama, to deny the Muslims their rights of living in safety under the Islamic Caliphate will result in the bloodshed of your people.''

We have no specific information that ISIL is planning an attack against the United States, but we also had no clear understanding of al-Qaeda's specific plotting in the days before 9/11 an attack that would claim nearly 3,000 American lives.

ISIL's territorial control, resources, brutality and intention to broaden their attacks make it clear that we must act. I support the President's actions to confront and ultimately destroy ISIL.

As he has said, we will expand airstrikes against ISIL targets, including in Syria; maintain a united international coalition—with Arab countries—that will contribute to the fight in meaningful ways; encourage continued political reconciliation in Baghdad to diminish ISIL's support from Sunni tribes; halt the flow of foreign fighters and resources to ISIL; and provide weapons to the Kurdish peshmerga, Iraqi security forces and moderate forces inside Syria.

Action is currently underway in many of those areas. Air strikes have helped defend key infrastructure such as the Mosul Dam and protected civilians in Amirli and Mt. Sinjar. More recently, the President has expanded the air campaign by going on the offensive and attacking ISIL on the outskirts of Baghdad.

Secretaries Kerry and Hagel have been building a coalition with international partners, including much of Europe and at least 10 Arab nations. New Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi is in the process of finalizing the Cabinet and has made sincere efforts to bridge the sectarian divide. These are all steps in the right direction. Today, the necessary action before us is to pass this CR, which provides limited authority to train and equip a military force to fight ISIL on the ground. The President has ruled out putting U.S. ground forces in combat roles for now, so we must have partners that can take the fight to ISIL. Without such a force, ISIL will continue to enjoy a safe haven in eastern Syria and once ISIL is pushed out of territory, the Assad regime or other extremists could fill the vacuum.

Bolstering this fighting force is critical to our goal of degrading and destroying ISIL. While it is just one part of the President's plan, it will work in conjunction with our ongoing diplomatic, intelligence, military and economic efforts.

The continuing resolution includes the authority the Defense Department needs to begin training such a force. The provision also requires the administration to produce a plan to explain how arming the moderate opposition fits within the President's larger regional strategy to defeat ISIL. It also requires regular reports to Congress to keep us informed of the training activities.

We already know Saudi Arabia is prepared to host a training program, and I suspect other Arab states will help fund it. But without this authority in this CR, U.S. troops and trainers will not be able to participate in this essential program.

Regardless of whether we waited too long to confront ISIL, we now have a strategy that we need to support to turn the tide. U.S. airstrikes in Iraq have protected our people and prevented a humanitarian catastrophe. As we now take the fight directly to ISIL, Congress needs to give the President the tools he needs to ramp up the battle.

This is a matter of national security and I hope members of both parties will come together to support the President's request.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Senate is about to vote on a continuing resolution to fund the Federal Government from October 1 to December 11. This vote should not be necessary. There is no good reason why we are not voting on fiscal year 2015 appropriations bills to fund the government the way we used to rather than a continuing resolution that keeps the government on autopilot despite many new and compelling needs.

Chairwoman MIKULSKI of the Appropriations Committee and her counterpart in the House, Chairman ROGERS, have made this argument as well as any two people could. It is unacceptable that the Congress, which has the power of the purse, fails to use that power in a responsible manner. Passing annual appropriations bills should be a priority for both parties, and I hope that between now and when this short-term CR expires, we can do our job and finish work on those bills which were reported by the Appropriations Committee months ago—and send them to the President.

Nine months ago, when the fiscal year 2014 omnibus was enacted, no one anticipated the Ebola epidemic which has infected thousands of people and today threatens all of Africa, thus, there is little funding available to combat it. The Defense Department, USAID, CDC, and others are scrambling to reprogram funds from other important programs.

Nine months ago, no one envisioned the surge in young migrants from Central America, and so the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Justice, Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Agency for International Development are reprogramming funds. But it is not nearly enough to address the horrific gang violence and endemic poverty in those countries that are contributing to the flood of refugees across our border.

Nine months ago, did anyone here predict that ISIS would be routing units of the Iraqi army, beheading Americans, and seizing control of territory? Did anyone foresee Russia's intervention in Ukraine? Did anyone foresee that we would be sending U.S. military advisors to Nigeria to help track down hundreds of school girls kidnapped by Boko Haram? There is no money in the budget for any of this, so we are robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations bills have been reported out of committee with strong bipartisan support. Let's debate them. Senators can offer amendments. We can vote. That is what we should be doing instead of kicking the ball down the road for another 2½ months.

Obviously, we all recognize the need to keep the Federal Government operating. As much as I disagree with this approach, I would vote for the continuing resolution to avoid a government shutdown. But this vote does far more than that. It authorizes the President under title 10 of the U.S. Code to provide training and weapons to Syrian rebel forces. In other words, we are authorizing U.S. military intervention in Syria's civil war which for the past 2 years the administration has strongly advised against and doing so by tacking that authority onto a short-term spending bill to keep the government operating.

As much as I believe the United States should support the fight against ISIS and as much as I commend the President and Secretary KERRY for their efforts to build a coalition to that end, I am not convinced that the President's plan to intervene in Syria can succeed. There are too many unanswered questions about the composition, intentions, allegiances, and capabilities of the so-called ''moderate'' Syrian rebels who, like the Iraqi militias that openly admit to atrocities, are accountable to no one.

There is too little clarity about the White House's intentions, particularly when there is talk of unilateral air attacks against ISIS by U.S. forces inside Syrian territory. There has been too little discussion of the potential consequences of this strategy for the brutal Assad regime which also opposes ISIS, for the anti-ISIS coalition, or for Iran's or Russia's ability to expand their influence in that region.

We have been assured that recipients of U.S. military equipment are vetted and that the use of the equipment is monitored. Yet we have seen U.S. military vehicles and weapons worth millions of dollars in the hands of ISIS and other anti-American groups in Iraq and Libya. Who can say who else has gotten their hands on them, or that the weapons we provide the Syrian rebels will not be used against innocent civilians or end up in the hands of our enemies?

The House resolution we are voting on addresses this issue narrowly, requiring vetting only as it relates to association with terrorists or Iran. It says nothing about vetting for gross violations of human rights, as would be required for assistance for foreign security forces under the Leahy Amendment.

The administration says we need to defeat ISIS. I don't disagree. ISIS is a barbaric enterprise that has no respect for human life and poses a grave threat to anyone it encounters, including Americans. Yet that is what the previous White House said about Al Qaeda. A dozen years and hundreds of billions of dollars and many American lives later, Al Qaeda is a shadow of what it once was but is far from defeated.

Since 9/11, numerous offshoots of Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups have proliferated not only in South Asia but throughout the Middle East and into east and north Africa. And one of those groups, formerly affiliated with Al Qaeda, is ISIS. Some say ISIS is worse than Al Qaeda. If ISIS is defeated, who comes next?

Not long ago the President said the sweeping 2001 authorization for the use of military force against those responsible for the 9/11 attacks should be repealed. Yet the White House recently cited it as a basis for attacking ISIS. Alternatively, the White House says the President has the authority he needs under the 2002 authorization for the use of military force to defeat Saddam Hussein. No objective reading of those resolutions supports that conclusion. Yet here we are about to embark on another open ended war against terrorism, albeit, thankfully, without U.S. ground troops.

We can help combat ISIS, and we must, but the Governments of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and others in that region—some of which have vast wealth—need to show they share that goal at least as much as we do, not just by their statements but by their actions.

They should take the lead. We can support them, although Saudi Arabia, besides being a major oil supplier, has one of the world's most repressive governments and Saudi charities have been a steady source of revenue for extremist groups. One has to wonder whether such alliances help or hurt us in the long run.

I have thought hard about this. It is far from black and white. I deeply respect the President. In the end, he may be right. But I worry about the slippery slope we may be starting down in the thick of a sectarian civil war. I am not prepared—on a stop-gap, short-term spending bill containing authority drafted by the House of Representatives, in the waning hours of the day of

adjournment, and with no opportunity for amendments—to endorse a policy that will involve spending hundreds of millions and almost certainly billions of dollars over multiple years to train and arm Syrian fighters who may or may not share our goals or values, not in a part of the world where past U.S. military interventions with similarly vague goals involving similarly questionable allies have consistently turned out very differently from the Pollyannaish predictions of former Pentagon and White House officials. Time and again we have been assured of relatively quick and easy success, only to pay dearly over the course of protracted, costly wars that fell far short of their lofty goals and unleashed forces of hatred that no one predicted.

Year after year, the administration asked Congress for billions of dollars to support former Iraqi President Malaki's government. Yet the White House now concedes that his sectarian policies and the widely reported abuses of the Iraqi army that the U.S. trained and equipped were a cause of the resentment and divisions that contributed to the rise of ISIS and threaten to break Iraq apart.

The Iraq war was a disaster for this country. The families of Americans who gave their lives or were grievously injured will suffer the consequences for many years to come. It caused lasting damage to our national reputation and to the image and readiness of our armed forces. Yet I worry that other than trying to avoid another costly deployment of U.S. ground troops, we have learned little from that fiasco. The Middle East is no place to intervene militarily without a thorough understanding of the history and the centuries-old tribal, religious, and ethnic rivalries that have far more relevance than anything we might think we can achieve.

Does that mean there is no role for the United States in that part of the world? Of course not. But rather than set goals that may or may not be realistic but will almost certainly have profound and potentially dangerous unintended and unanticipated consequences, let's have a real debate that thoroughly considers all the options, all the costs, all the pros and cons. This is far too important a decision to be dealt with in such a cursory manner.

So I will vote no, with the hope that in November or December we will revisit this issue and have the real debate we are avoiding today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I know that the hour is late and that my colleague from Oklahoma wishes to speak as well. I know Senators are eager to vote. I will not be long, but I will try to be concise in what I am about to say.

I came to the Senate primarily motivated by many different things, but one of the things that truly motivated me was the fiscal state of our country, the fear that our current spending patterns are not just unsustainable but threaten our future and impede our ability to achieve what I believe is our destiny—another American century.

That is why each time I have been here and I have had an opportunity placed before me to vote on a short-term spending matter, I have voted against it—because I felt they ignored our long-term problems of spending in this country and did not deal with them in a responsible way.

Once again, today we are confronted with a short-term spending bill that we are asked to approve; otherwise, the government will shut down and the world will stop spinning. But today's question is a little different from the ones that have been posed to us in the past. The one before us today has deeply imbedded in it an issue of national security.

For the better part of 3 years, I have argued that what is happening in Syria is in our national interest. Many, quite frankly, in my own party but also in the White House disagreed with my view. They felt that it was a regional conflict or one that could be handled by leading from behind. So from that time until today we have largely watched as events have unfolded in Syria without carefully explaining to the American people why we should care.

But I believed then—and I think I have been proven right by recent events—that what happened in Syria and what was happening in Syria was in our national interests because if we failed to influence the direction of that situation, it would leave open a space for radical jihadists from all over the world to establish an operation space from which they could carry out their plots not just against us but all free and freedom-loving people and peace-loving people in the world.

Sadly, that is what has happened in Syria. A protracted conflict has left open spaces, and foreign radical jihadists from everywhere on this planet have flowed to the deserts of Syria, where they set up organizations not just designed to topple Assad but to establish an Islamic caliphate that oversees multiple countries in the Middle East and ultimately will target us. I say ''target us'' because that caliphate cannot exist unless they drive America from the region. The way they intend to drive us from that region is by terrorizing us. Those efforts began recently when we saw the brutal murder of two brave young Americans—including one from my home State—for doing nothing other than being present and being from America.

Now we find ourselves in this situation. I feel the President and, as I said, people in both parties have taken too long to realize what a threat this is. I recognize that the options before us now are not as good as they would have been had we dealt with this 2 years ago, 3 years ago, or even 6 or 9 months ago. We have plenty of time in the weeks and months and years to come to debate what should have been done. I anticipate I will be involved in that debate because there are lessons to be learned from that. But today, as leaders of this country, we are called on to decide what we do now. What do we do now when confronted with a very real threat that, left unconfronted, will become a very real danger for the people we represent here in this country?

The President has come forward with a plan—a plan that I wish he had come forward with 6 months ago, that I called for 3 months ago. But I suppose, as in most things, better late than never. Even if late means our chances of success have been minimized, even if it will cost more money, and even if it will now take longer, better late than never.

That is the question before us now. I wish we had a separate debate on this issue. I wish we had a separate debate on this issue with regard to arming moderate rebel elements in Syria because there are real reasons to be concerned not just about whom we are arming but whether it will work.

I wish we had more time to debate the broader plan and come before this body and ask for an authorization for the use of force, although I think there is a compelling argument to be made that for immediate action, the President, as the Commander in Chief, does not need that authorization. We were not given that opportunity. What they are cheating is not just the political process, for in that debate we would have been able to inform the American people so they too would have learned more about this, but as a nation we could have come to a consensus about what the right thing to do is. But in the end, that is not the opportunity before us now. We are asked to decide things in this Chamber that are in the best interests of our country even if they did not work out the way we wanted them to or did not develop the way we wanted them to. That is what is before us here today.

I say this to you without a shadow of a doubt, as I said weeks ago: If we do not confront and defeat ISIL now, we will have to do so later. It will take a lot longer. It will be much costlier and even more painful. We will confront ISIL one way or the other—I believe the sooner, the better.

What we are asked to do now is approve funding to arm moderate rebel elements in Syria. There is no guarantee of success. There is none. But there is a guarantee of failure if we do not even try. Try we must for one fundamental reason: If we fail to approve this, the nations of that region will say that America is not truly engaged, that Americans are willing to talk about this but are not willing to do anything about it.

So despite my concerns about the underlying bill and the budgeting it entails, I will support this resolution because I think it is in the best interests of our national security.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time for the minority has expired.

Mr. COBURN. I have an inquiry of the Chair. It was my understanding that I had 4 minutes remaining on our side and that Senator RUBIO had time granted to him by the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. Is that not correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair is unaware of that arrangement.

Mr. COBURN. What I would simply do is ask unanimous consent that I have 7 minutes to make a statement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Ms. MIKULSKI. If the Senator can stick to 7 minutes, we have no objection.

Mr. COBURN. I can stick to 7 minutes. I will hear the gavel come down and I will quit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the motion of the Senator from Oklahoma is accepted and the Senator is recognized.

Mr. COBURN. First, I give praise to the chair and the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee for the cooperative nature of the committee this year in terms of inserting good government amendments into appropriations bills. It was a real pleasure to be able to work with them and to put some of the oversight results that we have done over the past few years into appropriations bills.

The bill we have on the floor, even though the chair is supporting the bill, is not her bill. It is a bill that came to her from House Republicans. So any criticism I might have of the bill is certainly not directed toward the chair of the Appropriations Committee. But it is important to be reminded of what the Congress told the American people less than 2 years ago, that we were going to go on a diet, and then 1 year ago when we had the Ryan-Murray agreement.

I will outline where we are with what we are getting ready to vote on, because we are about $47 billion above what we agreed to in the Ryan-Murray budget, and that doesn't include emergency funding.

Appropriators didn't write this bill. This bill came out of the House. We understand the timing of it, we understand the process. But this bill doesn't keep our word to the American public that we said we were going to keep. That is No. 1.

No. 2 is the chair of the Appropriations Committee attempted to put bills on the floor, and she was open to an amendment process. One bill was pulled because there was no agreement to allow any amendments to $3.6 trillion worth of spending—none, zero. That wasn't her desire. She is a fair broker in this body for what needs to be done when it comes to spending.

So I would make the point on the fiscal aspect of this bill.

When criminals in this country hurt other people, judges throughout the country—and Federal judges—impose a penalty, and criminals who are convicted end up paying into a Crime Victims Fund. The Crime Victims Fund isn't Federal tax dollars, it is individual payments by felons to make amens for damage and injury to people upon whom their crime was cast.

In this bill is $20 billion worth of false savings, but the way we calculate it is since we are not going to spend the money that is due to the crime victims, we are going to say that is going to save us money and, so, therefore, we can spend that money somewhere else.

If you did that on your income taxes or if you were a corporation and filed that with the SEC, it wouldn't take long for you to be in jail. But that is what the appropriators in the House did and we just got through doing this last December, the same amount of money on the same fund.

What I want the American people to see is regardless of whether you think we ought to pass this bill, shouldn't there be some clarity about the integrity of our numbers? Shouldn't we, if we can't meet the guidelines, just admit it and say we can't meet it rather than saying we are meeting it and create a false set of numbers? Shouldn't we at least do that? Aren't the American people worth that?

But instead, we have $11.8 billion from the Crime Victims Fund and $6.3 billion from the Children's Health Fund, which are false savings. They are not real savings.

So we are not going to be honest.

Well, I am going to be honest. The American public, the Senate, and the authors of this bill in the House will be lying to you if you believe the numbers in this bill. They are not true.

That is not the chair of the Appropriations Committee who made that decision, it was the House appropriators who made that decision to use false numbers to create a false set of achievements.

Finally, and I think I am about out of time, I would say there is one other aspect that disturbs me about this bill.

We have a mess in the Middle East today. Sitting on the Intelligence Committee and sitting on Homeland Security, I don't disagree we ought to be involved in terms of going after ISIS, but I think we ought to recognize that we created the problem in the first place. We created the vacuum that allowed that to flourish.

I will state my assessment of where we are. We now have recognized this threat and we have a political plan but no real policy plan to confront ISIS.

Having just heard from both the head of the CIA and also the Defense Department in response to the President's plan, what I can tell you is we know that something needs to be done, but your government doesn't yet know what to do.

I know there is authorization for monies in here. We need it. We are going to have to fight it. But let's be very clear, as Members of this body, to ask the important questions so that we don't go down a road that is made even worse. We have the brain power in the Senate, the experience, and the gray hair to do that.

I ask my colleagues to be very careful—not with this; this is going to happen. This CR is going to happen. It is a terrible way to run the government. The appropriations chair doesn't want to run it this way, but let's be very careful on the questions we ask in the future.

I thank the chair of the Appropriations Committee for her kindness in yielding me the time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I hope to say a few words to the Senator from Oklahoma before he leaves the floor. We are in the closing hours of not only this debate but of this session of Congress. I say to the Senator from Oklahoma on the brink of his retirement from the Senate how much I have enjoyed serving with him. Although we have different views from time to time, he has played a very important role in this institution relating in terms of focusing on so many aspects of folly, fraud, stupidity, and duplication. I could go on.

I thank you. I know how we joined shoulder to shoulder on no more lavish spending at some of those conferences where it was $4 for a Swedish meatball. But seriously, as we worked on this year's appropriations, he and I actually met on how we could improve government and keep a careful eye, with some of us saying just get rid of some of the things that cost money and add no value to the government or its compelling needs.

I thank the Senator for his service in the Senate.

Also, hopefully, when we return, we can work on an omnibus to incorporate the very reforms around waste, duplication, and folly that we worked together on on a bipartisan basis.

Mr. COBURN. I thank my colleague.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, we are in the closing hours of debate. There are two other Senators who will be coming to speak. I hope they will be here sooner. There is a lot going on, and I want to encourage colleagues, as we get ready, to urge a vote on passage of the continuing resolution.

This measure will keep government going through December 11. But make no mistake, this is government on auto pilot.

I hope to be back in December, shoulder to shoulder with Senator SHELBY, where we will work on a comprehensive funding legislation—in other words, an omnibus.

This is Washington speak. I mean, really, we use words nobody understands: continuing resolutions, omnibus, motions to proceed. But in plain English, it would mean taking all 12 subcommittees that are in charge of funding the government through due

diligence and putting together a comprehensive funding bill that can be debated, scrutinized, debated, and voted on.

We have done our work over the year. I am very proud of my subcommittee chairmen, the ranking members who have worked on a bipartisan basis, and their staffs. We can do an omnibus when we come back that will enable us to make the choices we need to do, meet our national security needs, the compelling human needs of the country, and make sure we have an opportunity ladder for our people who are middle class to stay there or those who want to work hard to do better to be able to get there, and to also make those investments in innovation, research, and development that create the new ideas for the new jobs that keep us as an exceptional Nation.

I do hope we get final passage. I do hope also when we return after the election, we can do this comprehensive funding bill.

Again, I thank Senator SHELBY of Alabama and all of the other members of the Appropriations Committee who worked so hard with the ranking members. We had a series of debates and votes. We worked very hard. Yet I wish people would come to our committees, as they were categorized by civility, intellectual rigor, and scrutiny of IG and GAO reports. We worked very hard to accomplish the mission of these agencies to keep our government strong and to get value for the taxpayer.

Again, thanks to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, led by Senator SHELBY of Alabama.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEBBIE SMITH REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2014

Mr. LEAHY. I see my good friend, the senior Senator from Texas, on the floor, and I am about to ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4323.

Before I do, Senator CORNYN has been very interested in this. This is the Debbie Smith Reauthorization Act. I have been working with Debbie Smith since her bill was first introduced in 2001. He is probably one of the few Senators who was here with me at that time when I first supported it. It is to improve access to rape kits, testing, and services for survivors of sexual assault.

Senator CORNYN has been a strong supporter. I know he also supports the Justice for All Act as well, something he cosponsored, and the distinguished Republican leader has.

I would like to get them all passed. I realize one Republican—not the Senator from Texas—is objecting to passing the Justice for All Act, and I don't want to pit one against the other.

Because at least this one expires this month, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4323, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4323) to reauthorize programs authorized under the Debbie Smith Reauthorization Act of 2004, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Simply reserving the right to object, and obviously I am not going to object, I am very happy we could reauthorize this important piece of legislation. I have had an opportunity to get to know Debbie Smith pretty well, as Senator CORNYN and Senator LEAHY have. We have met on several occasions.

The bill passed the House of Representatives a few months ago on a voice vote. We tried to clear it when it came over here. Unfortunately, there was an objection on the other side of the aisle. But I am glad we are where we are and that the bill will be reauthorized.

It is certainly fitting for Congress to pass this bill that is named for such a tireless advocate for those who suffered this terrible abuse.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, reserving the right to object, and I won't object, let me use this occasion to say to the chairman of the Judiciary Committee how much I appreciate his leadership and cooperation.

Obviously, Senator MCCONNELL, Senator LEAHY, and I are all cosponsors of the bigger piece of legislation, the Justice for All Act. I share Senator LEAHY's desire—I am sure shared by the Republican leader—that we pass that today. But since we can't do that, and since we are engaged in the art of the possible, this is a good outcome—not just for Debbie Smith, who, as we have all heard, has been a tireless advocate for testing this backlog of rape kits, which holds extraordinary power to both identify the perpetrators in sexual assaults and exonerate people who are not implicated by a DNA test, but as we know, we have had a huge backlog, and the Debbie Smith Reauthorization Act renewal is bipartisan legislation that will provide funds for law enforcement officials to deal with the national scandal, which the rape kit backlog is.

Amidst the frustration we all experience in the Senate from time to time, this is good news and this represents progress.

So I will agree with the unanimous consent request.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Reserving the right to object—and obviously I too won't—on behalf of all the women of the Senate, I thank Senator LEAHY for his consistent, persistent leadership on this issue, and Senator CORNYN.

This is how the Senate ought to work—on a bipartisanship basis, meeting a compelling need, and then being able to move it in an expeditious way.

But for rape victims everywhere to know that we can deal with this backlog and because good men stood up for women who have been wronged really is one of the edifying moments of today.

I thank the Senators for it and withdraw my objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Hearing no objection, the request is agreed to.

The bill (H.R. 4323) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I will continue to work with the distinguished senior Senator from Texas on the Justice for All Act. Ninety-nine Senators agree to pass it and only 1 is objecting. It requires a rollcall vote when we come back in November. I hope we can have that rollcall vote perhaps in a timely rotation. And with 99 Senators who say they support it, the 1 Senator who has been blocking it can vote against it. But those of us who have been in law enforcement know how important it is.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS RESOLUTION, 2015—Continued

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, how much time do we have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 3½ minutes.

Ms. MIKULSKI. In the spirit of moving the bill forward, I yield back all remaining time.

AMENDMENT NO. 3852

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to the motion to table amendment No. 3852.

The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.