

These were the same messages told to Venezuela by its neighbors in Latin America.

I suggested that meeting these obvious international norms and restoring the power of the country's duly elected National Assembly would help ease Venezuela's isolation and the suffering of its people.

Tragically, obstinately, President Maduro and his circle of corrupt colleagues chose to double down. They held a sham election.

Its legitimacy was rejected by the international community and the consequences have been predictable: continued mass exodus of desperate Venezuelans to neighboring countries, inflation nearing 1 million percent, deepening international isolation, and of course, an increasingly ruthless crackdown on political opponents to further solidify the regime's illegitimate hold on power.

This regime already had a shameful history of jailing political opponents. Their victims include Judge Maria Afuni, who had the courage to rule against the government on a case before her, Leopoldo Lopez, the former mayor of Caracas who was a highly popular national candidate and therefore remains under house arrest and unable to compete in elections, and so many others including a number of dual American-Venezuelan citizens.

And now, it has jailed young elected National Assembly Member Juan Requesens on highly questionable charges.

His crime? Criticizing President Maduro and the staggering human suffering and the demise of democracy under his dictatorial rule.

Haunting videos of Requesens in detention have surfaced which strongly suggest torture and inhumane treatment.

Several months ago, I had the great pleasure of sitting down with several of Juan's colleagues when I was in Caracas. These are the next generation of young leaders, brave men and women who won at the ballot box in many areas previously won by Hugo Chavez and Maduro.

They won because they made an effort to understand voters' economic concerns and how former ruling parties had too often become corrupt or ignored the poor. They were the hope for the future, but to this Maduro regime, they were a threat.

So voter and candidate registrations were manipulated to make it harder for

opposition parties and candidates to compete. Elected National Assembly Members were harassed and threatened. In some cases, their passports were confiscated.

I will never forget when they told me that, if I returned a year later, that half of them might be gone, jailed or chased into exile. Sadly, they were right.

My colleagues Senators MENENDEZ, NELSON, RUBIO, CORNYN, and I will introduce legislation in the days ahead that will further targeted sanctions against those Venezuelan officials responsible for this scandalous regime and those responsible for Juan's detention. It will also provide additional aid to help with the humanitarian crises in and along Venezuela's borders.

I wish we had not reached this desperate moment. I wish the Maduro regime would play by basic democratic rules and let the Venezuelan people freely decide their leaders. I wish the Maduro regime had the courage to compete in a free and fair election.

But it didn't.

So until it does and until Leopoldo, Juan, and the many other Venezuelan political prisoners are freed, the National Assembly's powers restored, and a legitimate democratic process is re-established, I will continue to support pressure on this corrupt regime and sanctioning those responsible for the Venezuela's misery.

**BUDGET ENFORCEMENT LEVELS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019**

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, section 251 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, BBEDCA, establishes statutory limits on discretionary spending and allows for various adjustments to those limits. In addition, sections 302 and 314(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 allow the chairman of the Budget Committee to establish and make revisions to allocations, aggregates, and levels consistent with those adjustments.

The Senate will soon consider the conference report to H.R. 6157, a spending measure covering programs within the jurisdiction of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, Labor-HHSE. The Defense portion of this legislation includes funding designated as overseas contingency operations funding pursuant to section

251(b)(2)(A)(ii) of BBEDCA. The Labor-HHSE portion includes spending designated for various program integrity efforts pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(B), section 251(b)(2)(C), and section 251(b)(2)(E) of BBEDCA. The inclusion of these designations with these provisions makes this spending eligible for an adjustment under the Congressional Budget Act.

On August 16, 2018, I filed an adjustment relating to S. Amdt. 3695 to H.R. 6157, which contained appropriations for the same two appropriations subcommittees. The Defense portion of the amendment contained \$67,914 million in revised security budget authority designated as overseas contingency operations and \$37,285 million in outlays, and the Labor-HHSE portion contained \$1,897 million in revised nonsecurity budget authority for program integrity initiatives with \$1,573 million in outlays. The budgetary adjustment was made to accommodate this spending.

Since the levels of budget authority for overseas contingency operations and budget authority and outlays for program integrity spending in the conference report are consistent with the previously filed levels and appropriately designated, those funds are now available for use in this conference report. However, the amount of outlays flowing from the overseas contingency operations funding in the conference report is estimated to be \$214 million less than my earlier adjustment. Therefore, I am reducing the general purpose outlay allocation to the Appropriations Committee and budgetary aggregates to reflect this new estimate at this time.

I ask unanimous consent that the accompanying tables, which provide details about the adjustment, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

	\$ in millions	2019
Current Spending Aggregates:		
Budget Authority .....		3,617,479
Outlays .....		3,546,608
Adjustments:		
Budget Authority .....		0
Outlays .....		-214
Revised Spending Aggregates:		
Budget Authority .....		3,617,479
Outlays .....		3,546,394

**REVISION TO SPENDING ALLOCATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019**

(Pursuant to Sections 302 and 314(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974)

	\$ in millions	2019
Current Allocation:		
Revised Security Discretionary Budget Authority .....		715,835
Revised Nonsecurity Category Discretionary Budget Authority .....		598,897
General Purpose Outlays .....		1,352,999
Adjustments:		
Revised Security Discretionary Budget Authority .....		0
Revised Nonsecurity Category Discretionary Budget Authority .....		0
General Purpose Outlays .....		-214
Revised Allocation:		
Revised Security Discretionary Budget Authority .....		715,835
Revised Nonsecurity Category Discretionary Budget Authority .....		598,897
General Purpose Outlays .....		1,352,785

Memorandum: Detail of Adjustments Made Above

	Regular	OCO	Program Integrity	Disaster Relief	Emergency	Total
Revised Security Discretionary Budget Authority .....	0	0	0	0	0	0
Revised Nonsecurity Category Discretionary Budget Authority .....	0	0	0	0	0	0
General Purpose Outlays .....	0	-214	0	0	0	-214

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the September 6, 2018, vote on the motion to confirm Executive Calendar No. 779, Dominic W. Lanza to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Arizona. I would have voted no.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the September 6, 2018, vote on the motion to confirm Executive Calendar No. 782, Charles J. Williams to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Iowa. I would have voted aye.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the September 12, 2018, vote on the motion to invoke cloture on Charles P. Rettig, of California, to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue for the term expiring November 12, 2022. I would have voted no.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the September 12, 2018, vote on the motion to confirm Charles P. Rettig, of California, to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue for the term expiring November 12, 2022. I would have voted no.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the September 12, 2018, vote on the conference report to accompany H.R. 5895, a bill making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes. I would have voted aye.

H.R. 5895

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, the Senate passed 3 of the required 12 appropriations bills needed to fund the Federal Government starting on October first. The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, Energy and Water, and Legislative Branch appropriations bills fund vital programs that care for our military, protect our infrastructure, and support the dedicated Federal employees that work for the U.S. Congress.

Within the minibus, programs and projects such as the VA's National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Army Corps dredging for the Port of Baltimore, and a new paid-internship program in the Senate are just a few of the hundreds of items funded in these bills that will benefit the people of Maryland and the Nation. However, I do not support the \$65 million appropriated in fiscal year 2019 for a new low-yield nuclear warhead for a submarine-launched ballistic missile. I believe this is an unnecessary new weapon that increases the risk of miscalculation and unintended escalation.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am pleased that we have gotten this far and I look for-

ward to working with my colleagues on moving the other bills to final passage.

SYRIA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing on Russia's role in Syria and the broader Middle East that had been scheduled for last week has been postponed; therefore, I rise today to raise awareness on the danger and urgency of the moment, given the impending humanitarian catastrophe in Idlib, Syria, and the refusal of the Trump administration to impose meaningful costs on Russia for protecting Bashar al-Assad and his regime.

On Syria, Congress again finds itself in a situation where we often hear more from the press than we do directly from the administration. Last week many of us read with interest in the Washington Post a report that President Trump agreed to a new strategy for Syria that indefinitely extends the U.S. military presence and supports a major diplomatic push to end the conflict. This same article also indicated that the administration views the military campaign against ISIS as nearly complete and that U.S. goals have now shifted to Iran's presence in Syria given the doubts that Russia is willing and capable of ejecting Iran from Syria.

Congress and the American people deserve to hear directly from the Trump administration whether in fact this is our new strategy. When this hearing is rescheduled, I expect the administration to explain in detail its proposed diplomatic engagement and the plan for U.S. forces in Syria after ISIS is defeated. I also want to know what specific tools the administration proposes to use to ensure the removal of Iran from Syria; compel the Assad regime to cease and Russia to cease support for the bombing, torture, and gassing of Syrian civilians; and hold Assad's brutal regime to account for its crimes against the Syrian people, as well as consequences for the Kremlin's support of this brutal regime.

In my view, Russia is fully culpable for perpetuating the war in Syria and rendering that country persistently unstable, a magnet for violent extremists and a direct threat to Israel.

Now more than ever, we must shine a light on Russia's role in perpetuating the conflict in Syria, as well as Russia's role in the region. And while we still await details on the disastrous and embarrassing Helsinki summit between Presidents Trump and Putin, I am deeply concerned that for the Syrian people Helsinki made a bad situation worse.

I fear that President Trump did not raise Russia's war crimes in Syria,

such as Russian aircraft dropping Russian bombs in densely populated areas of Syria. I doubt that President Trump called Putin out for violating the deescalation agreement in southern Syria, agreed to last year by the United States, Russia, and Jordan. I am skeptical that President Trump pressed Putin to commit to delivering Assad to participate in good faith at the UN-led process for a negotiated settlement along the lines of Security Council Resolution 2254. I doubt that President Trump insisted that Russia break its sinister alliance with Tehran that has enabled the survival of Assad in Syria and threatened the security of Israel. And I see no indication that the administration is using any of the tools Congress has given it—including mandatory sanctions provisions in the Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act of 2017, CAATSA—to change the status quo in Syria or prevent the looming assault on Idlib province, where Russia is already engaged in a bombing campaign alongside its client Assad.

It seems to me that the administration is taking a backseat—or maybe has gotten out of the car entirely—while the Assad-Russia-Iran alliance is left unchallenged to starve, torture, and bomb the Syrian people into submission.

While the humanitarian dimensions of this tragedy are reason enough for the administration to take a different approach, there are significant strategic consequences for allowing or enabling an Assad-Russia-Iran partnership to solidify as a salient feature of the landscape of the Middle East. But instead of U.S. leadership shaping the region, we have instead Vladimir Putin—the man who has long ensured Bashar al-Assad's survival—flying around the Middle East completing deals for base access and weapons sales. And rather than utilize the threat of CAATSA sanctions to compel U.S. partners in the Arab world to cease significant purchases from the Russian defense and intelligence sectors, the administration instead sought a national security waiver for this provision of the law.

While the United States has backed away from its key leadership role in addressing the region's conflicts, governments in the Middle East rolled out the red carpet for Putin and flocked to Russia during the World Cup to sit by his side and sign agreements for increased cooperation.

Putin can only take away one message from this posture by the Trump administration: Russian activities and influence in the Middle East will not be challenged in any meaningful way by the United States.