

American people and reclaim America's global leadership on Russia policy. While he has repeatedly failed to do so, yet another opportunity lies before him this week at the G20 summit in Buenos Aires, where he is scheduled to meet with Putin. If ever there were a time for this President to defend our country, our principles, and those of our allies, this would be it. If ever there were an opportunity for American leadership, this would be it. If there were ever a time for President Trump to find his spine on Russia, this would be it.

In the meantime, President Trump must use this week's opportunity in Buenos Aires to send a clear message to Putin that we will not tolerate its increasingly aggressive behavior in Ukraine. Here is what I believe the President must do:

First, the United States needs to increase assistance to our friends in Ukraine in the face of continued aggression in Donbass and now in the Kerch Strait. The Trump administration must immediately increase security assistance to Ukraine, including the provision of lethal maritime equipment and weapons. In addition, we must bolster intelligence-sharing with Kiev and assist Ukraine's efforts to improve its maritime domain awareness.

Second, NATO has a critical role and should consider increasing exercises and its presence in the Black Sea. The United States has maintained an active presence in the South China Sea to protect shipping lanes. NATO should move quickly to establish such a presence in the Black Sea.

Third, the United States should increase sanctions pressure on Russia immediately. This is long overdue. The President is required to impose sanctions on Russia under the CAATSA law. Several mandatory provisions of the law remain ignored. I would offer that now would be a good time to follow the law. But imposing sanctions alone does not constitute a real strategy.

Fourth, Sunday's events present an important opportunity for American engagement with like-minded allies across Europe. Now is the time for serious diplomacy and coalition-building in the face of this threat. Our European friends spoke out in full opposition to Russia's attack on Sunday. Now let's see if we can work together to turn words into action and deter such Kremlin attacks in the future.

Finally, as the situation in Ukraine grows more perilous, we in the Senate must also live up to our national security responsibilities. Following the President's failures in Helsinki, Senator GRAHAM and I, along with others, introduced the Defending American Security from Kremlin Aggression Act, known as DASKAA. This legislation is more than another sanctions bill; it charts a comprehensive way forward for how the United States can better defend its interests and those of our close allies against Putin's unrelenting

assault on our values, security, economic interests, and the rules-based international order.

After months of Senate hearings on the legislation, we have nothing to show for it, as both the Senate Foreign Relations and Banking Committees have refused to mark up new legislation to respond to the Kremlin threat. What are we waiting for? What are we waiting for? The alarm bells are ringing. Yet the Senate Republican leadership is sound asleep. They are asleep as Trump concedes more ground to the Kremlin in Ukraine and cyber space; asleep while Russian ships ram Ukrainian vessels in international waters and injure brave Ukrainian sailors; asleep while Vladimir Putin pounds away at our points of vulnerability.

The American people deserve a vote on DASKAA before we leave for the holidays. Anything less would be a mark of shameful abdication of our responsibility to protect and defend our national interests.

I hope this Chamber will wake up to this growing threat. Perhaps Sunday's attack will be a ringing alarm clock that compels this body and the international community to act.

Finally, the American people cannot afford a weak performance by President Trump at the G20 summit, like we saw in Helsinki—cannot afford such a performance.

President Trump, this is your opportunity to finally show American leadership in defense of our principles and our close allies across Europe.

The time is now. It is critical. We are waiting to see that in fact the President can rise to the moment.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Finally, on another matter, I want to address breaking news of the day on a related matter. Yesterday, we learned from an exclusive report in the Guardian that former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort repeatedly held secret talks with WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange within the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. These revelations reported publicly in the Guardian, if true, raise serious, new questions about the Trump campaign's possible relationship with WikiLeaks, including the timed release of hacked emails orchestrated to inflict maximum damage on Hillary Clinton's 2016 Presidential campaign.

According to the published report, Manafort visited in 2015 and then again in the spring of 2016—just in time for Trump to name him the RNC convention manager. Sources in Ecuador say Manafort's meetings with Assange may have been purposefully kept off the Embassy's official visitor log. It is essential that Ecuador's current government publicly and swiftly confirm whether former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa and his administration allowed these meetings to take place.

Given that Secretary Pompeo met with Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Valencia yesterday morning—the day before this report came out—the State

Department and the intelligence community must immediately brief the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Mr. Manafort's interaction with Mr. Assange, as well as the Ecuadorian Government's role in any meetings. This is critical for us to know, and I hope it won't take other actions to get clarity.

I am already concerned that tomorrow we are having an all-Members briefing on what happened with Saudi Arabia and the murder of Mr. Khashoggi, and there won't be anybody from the intelligence community there. Where is Gina Haspel, the head of the CIA? She went and listened to the tapes. Her Agency is reported to have come up with conclusions that said, yes, the Crown Prince knew and was involved, yet we are going to have a briefing without anybody from the intelligence community. It is an affront to the Senate, which has responsibilities—oversight and otherwise—to understand what is the appropriate action of this body as it relates to U.S. foreign policy and this particular ally. But we are not going to have anybody from the intelligence community. To me, that is the ultimate coverup.

So I want to know what happened and whether this Guardian report is true. I want to know from the intelligence community what their determination is. I don't want to hear it characterized by someone else; I want to hear it directly from them. Only then can we actually act in a way that is both concerted and with the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions on critical U.S. foreign policy.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

WITHDRAWAL OF NOMINATION HOLDS

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, the Finance Committee has worked with the Treasury Department to ensure proper responsiveness to committee inquiries. We are continuing to review these matters to determine what further oversight is required.