

Democrats support and have always supported strong border security, but the fact is, according to the CBP, apprehensions at our southern border are at historic lows.

President Trump couldn't convince Mexico, he couldn't convince the American people, and he couldn't convince their elected representatives to pay for his ineffective and expensive wall. Now he is trying an end run around Congress in a desperate attempt to put taxpayers on the hook for it. Make no mistake—Congress will defend our constitutional authorities in every way that we can.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

RUSSIA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, over the last 2 years, many of us have grappled with a very difficult question about our President. It is a question that never before could we even imagine thinking about an American President, let alone saying it out loud on the floor of the Senate. I am talking about the entirely legitimate question of whether Donald Trump could be compromised by the Russian Government. It is more than a legitimate question; it is the natural question that comes to mind every time we learn more about the links between President Trump, his associates, and the Russian Government.

With the Mueller investigation possibly coming to a close in the near future, we may be forced to deal with—both Congress and the American public—some very stark facts about the President's ties to Russia. Just think about the reported revelations over the last month or so.

We have learned that President Trump took unprecedented steps to conceal the contents of his conversations with Putin from his own advisers.

We have learned that following one of the meetings with Putin, Trump phoned a New York Times reporter to argue that Russia did not interfere in the 2016 election—once again carrying the Kremlin's water in direct conflict with the entire U.S. intelligence community.

We have learned that over the past year, President Trump repeatedly argued for pulling the United States out of NATO—something that Putin desires.

We continue to learn new details about Paul Manafort's—President Trump's campaign chairman—meetings with Konstantin Kilimnik, a Russian national with suspected ties to Russian intelligence and an associate of Oleg Deripaska's. We know that Manafort met with Kilimnik repeatedly, provided him with polling data, and discussed ending U.S. sanctions and adopting a Russia-friendly peace plan for Ukraine. This is perhaps the most significant indication that Trump's inner circle was discussing pro-Kremlin policies in the months before the election.

Tellingly, just last night, we learned that Manafort has lied again and again about the truth of his contacts and his conversations. Did Manafort determine that lying to prosecutors was a better alternative to telling the truth?

Finally, let's not forget the revelation from just a few weeks ago that the Nation's top law enforcement agency reportedly opened a counterintelligence investigation into the President, in part for firing the FBI Director because of "this Russia thing."

You can't make this stuff up. Not even in your wildest dreams, not even on the TV set of "Homeland" could you make this stuff up. The news of a possible counterintelligence investigation against a sitting President should shake us all to the core. Instead, we are barely even surprised.

For the rightwing pundits who spoon-feed a warped reality to President Trump every hour of the day, it is just one more excuse to paint him—the most powerful man in the world—as a victim, but for the rest of us, these revelations only sharpen the dread that gnaws at us as we search our minds for any explanation for President Trump's perplexing posture toward Russia.

Look, I may have my differences with the President on tax policy, on immigration policy, on healthcare policy, and more, but let me assure you, every time he was set to meet with Putin, I, for one, hoped and prayed that our President would prove our suspicions wrong.

I hoped that the President of the United States would stand up to Putin and demand accountability for Russia's interference in the 2016 elections—the cyber attacks, the stolen data, the malign social influence campaigns designed to stoke division and doubt in the American people. I hoped President Trump would make clear to Putin that legal aggression against Ukraine and the continual denial of Ukrainian sovereignty is unacceptable and will result in consequences. I hoped President Trump would not congratulate Putin on another sham election victory but operate from a position of truth about his grip on power—that it comes from the oppression of the Russian people, the seizure of their assets, the torture and murder of dissenters, the building of a chemical weapons arsenal, and the denial of a free press and basic human rights. And of course I hoped President Trump would not budge an inch on sanctions on the Kremlin.

But time and again, our President has let us down. He has let our country down. He has let our country down. He has let Americans to lie awake at night asking themselves: What does Putin have on our President? Why won't he hold Russia accountable? Why won't he champion the values of democracy, freedom, and human rights that transcend political parties and define our greatest ideals as a nation?

Instead, our President champions talking points that could have only come out of the Kremlin. Let me provide just a few examples.

He told the leaders of the G7 that Crimea should be a part of Russia. He told the President of France to leave the EU. He said that Montenegro, a NATO member, could start World War III because they are "very aggressive people." He said that the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan because "terrorists were going into Russia" and Russia was "right to be there."

The Wall Street Journal rightly said that "we cannot recall a more absurd misstatement of history by an American President."

I challenge anyone to find one person—one person in the State Department, the Defense Department, the National Security Council—who believes these statements and would have put them in the President's ear. So who does he get these ideas from? I can think of only one person—his good friend Vladimir Putin.

Thus far, our greatest insights into what may be driving President Trump's peculiar behavior toward Russia have come out of Special Counsel Mueller's investigation and the additional investigations spawned by it. With every new court filing, we learn that the tentacles of Russian influence over the President and his associates are wrapped tighter than we previously thought.

Meanwhile, the President and his cheerleaders on FOX News continue to discredit the Mueller probe as some kind of partisan witch hunt, when the truth is that it has already resulted in 4 individual sentences, 7 guilty pleas, and a total of more than 30 people and 3 Russian entities charged.

But all of this still begs the question why. Why does President Trump behave as though he has been compromised by the Russian Government? Why is he so deferential to Putin? We saw that at the Helsinki summit. Why have those around the President gone to such great lengths to cover up and lie about the extent of their interactions with Russia and with Russians?

Of course, if we can consider the possibility that the President is an asset of the Russian Government, we then have to wonder whether he is a witting or an unwitting asset.

On the one hand, it seems as though most of what President Trump does is unwitting. Perhaps his refusal to take Russian interference in 2016 seriously is merely an outgrowth of his narcissism, a symptom of a fragile ego that cannot accept that maybe, just maybe the unprecedented malign influence campaign orchestrated by the Kremlin did indeed sway some votes on election day.

On the other hand, the more I learn about President Trump's strange behavior toward Russia, the more I wonder if he knows exactly what is going on; the more I wonder if he knows that his campaign was making promises about pro-Kremlin positions and rolling back sanctions; the more I wonder if Trump knows that he is indebted to Russia and cannot allow the truth of

his business dealings to come to light, for the truth may tell us that Trump's overtures to Putin, his disparaging of NATO, his refusal to fully apply congressionally mandated sanctions, and his mixed messages on Ukraine are actually instances of conspiracy with the Kremlin in real time.

Perhaps it is because I am from New Jersey and I have lived through decades of Donald Trump's questionable business dealings, but I cannot understand why anyone would flat out reject the proposition that he is indebted to Russia. He is the first Presidential candidate in decades to refuse to disclose his tax returns. He is the first President in modern history to refuse to divest from his business interests, leaving us wondering whether he and his family are profiting from his position in the Oval Office.

Beyond the myth of the man, Trump is no business genius. He was a millionaire by age 8, thanks to his father. He ran the business into the ground. He defaulted on debt, refused to pay workers, and declared multiple corporate bankruptcies. Eventually, American banks saw through him and refused to lend him money, so Trump had to look elsewhere for cash. When you have been essentially blacklisted from the U.S. banking system, where do you turn? You turn to less savory sources.

The fact that the Trump Organization courted and sold real estate to wealthy Russian buyers and financiers is no secret, nor is the reality that to be wealthy in Putin's Russia means to have close ties to the Kremlin. Much of the stolen wealth amassed by Putin and his cronies must be hidden from the global financial system, so where do you turn? Real estate.

After a string of bankruptcies and racking up debt for years, the Trump Organization suddenly began making a spate of large, unexplainable cash purchases, totaling \$400 million over 9 years. Giant, mysterious, inexplicable cash transactions are the hallmark of money laundering. So where did they get the cash? Well, if we are to believe the words of the President and his sons, much of it came from Russia. In fact, it was Donald Junior who said in 2008 that "we see a lot of money pouring in from Russia" and Eric Trump who reportedly said in 2014 that "we don't rely on American banks. We have all the funding we need out of Russia."

We know that several Trump projects, like Trump SoHo and Trump Toronto, received significant funding from Kremlin-linked financiers. In fact, Trump Toronto was funded by an asset sale by the Russian bank VTB—a transaction that would have likely needed approval from Putin himself. We now know that the Trump Organization pursued the Trump Moscow project for far longer than he led on, including well into his campaign for President.

The President has unequivocally said that he has "zero investments in Russia." Well, here is the problem: Donald

Trump may not have investments in Russia, but it is quite possible that the Kremlin has an investment in him.

That is what keeps me up at night.

That is why I believe the time is now to pass legislation requiring all Presidential candidates to disclose their tax returns and why I am the sponsor of such legislation.

So many of my colleagues decried Trump's shattering of this norm, but since he arrived at White House, the Republicans have done nothing to stop it from becoming the new normal.

We still don't know who is behind the vast majority of the Trump organization projects around the world, many of which continue to this day. We have to follow the money to get to the truth. How else will we ever know why our President is either unable or unwilling to publicly stand up to Putin?

What too many of my Republican colleagues seem to forget is that at the end of the day, this is not about Donald Trump; it is about the American people. It is about whether an American President may be beholden to foreign interests and how those interests fare against our own.

When the President embraces our greatest adversaries and gives the back of the hand to our closest allies; when he continually denies Russia's interference in 2016 and belittles the findings of our entire intelligence community; when, in spite of those findings, he suggests lifting sanctions on the Russians; when he backs down from challenging Putin after Russia commits an unacceptable act of aggression against Ukraine in the Sea of Azov, an international border, then we need a Congress willing to live up to its role as a coequal branch of government.

We cannot blindly follow a potentially compromised President down this dangerous path in which our alliances are suffering, our leadership on the global stage is waning, and our competitors are seeking to fill the void.

We need to know the facts—not the latest spin dropped by Rudy Giuliani—the facts. The American people deserve to know whom they elected to be their President. They deserve to know if he is, in fact, putting America's interests first. They deserve to know if Donald Trump is wittingly or unwittingly an agent for the Russian Federation.

Congress must carry out its constitutional duty to fully and thoroughly investigate where the facts lead. That is why we must protect the integrity of all oversight efforts including the objective, sober investigation still being conducted by Robert Mueller, and that is why we must push for his final report to be made public to the American people.

At the same time, this administration's deference to the Kremlin demands Congress be proactive in shaping U.S. foreign policy toward Russia, especially with respect to sanctions. We saw that with the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanc-

tions or CAATSA law passed in 2017 with the support of 98 Senators.

Given the circumstances we face today, we need additional legislation to protect American interests. That is why Senator GRAHAM and I introduced just yesterday the Defending America's Security from Kremlin Aggression Act or DASKA, a bipartisan piece of legislation that is joined by several of our Republican colleagues.

This comprehensive legislation will ensure our diplomats have the tools to advance our interests and stand up to the bully in the Kremlin. It includes new sanctions, as well as provisions designed to harden our democratic institutions and make us less vulnerable to attack. Perhaps most urgently, DASKA requires Senate consent, should the President act on his desire to pull the United States out of NATO. To risk letting this President pull our Nation out of a military alliance so vital to America's security would be a tragedy fit for the ages.

The collapse of NATO is No. 1 on Mr. Putin's wish list, and with leaders like Secretary Mattis no longer around to babysit this President, Congress has a responsibility to act. This bipartisan bill is essential to giving the United States a more solid footing against the Kremlin moving forward.

We should treat DASKA with urgency. The time to pass this legislation is now. We need hearings, a vote on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and swift consideration on the floor of the Senate.

Likewise, we must finally pass legislation to protect the Mueller investigation and to require that all Presidential candidates release their tax returns.

I know, deep down, that many of my Republican colleagues share my concerns. I have talked with them, a fair number of them, yet they are afraid of angering the Party of Trump. Well, I believe that they would be seen as American heroes.

Should the facts confirm our greatest fears to be true, I ask my colleagues to consider what the history books will say about those who knew the President of the United States might very well be compromised by a foreign power, yet still did nothing. I am talking about my Republican colleagues who seem to have numbed themselves to the latest bombshell revelations about the President's posture on Russia. Apparently, they don't want to know why Russia interfered in 2016 to help Trump win. They don't want to know why the Republican platform's strong language on Russia was watered down by the Trump team. They don't want to know how someone deeply indebted to Russian oligarchs and later caught giving polling data to Russian intelligence contacts became chairman of the campaign. They don't want to know why Russia began hacking Hillary Clinton's emails the same day that Candidate Trump asked them to do so.

They don't want to know why the President undermines our intelligence community and attacks law enforcement for investigating Russian interference. They don't want to know why he seeks to dismantle NATO, a pillar of security, prosperity, and the defense of western democratic ideals. They don't want to know why he shares Putin's joy when discord unfolds in Europe. They don't want to know why Trump forbade his interpreter from disclosing the contents of his conversations with Putin and took his notes. In short, they don't want to know the truth.

Well, now is not the time to ignore the facts or avoid the truth. We are living in a time of unthinkable questions, and should the facts reveal the most unthinkable of answers, we must do what is necessary to protect the interests of the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

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

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

Mr. REED. Mr. President, first, let me commend the Senator from New Jersey for his very articulate, detailed, and factually specific discussion of Russian malign influence across the globe but, particularly, here in the United States.

RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE

Mr. President, today I rise to continue my series of speeches with regard to Russian hybrid warfare and, specifically, to provide policy recommendations in response to the threat from Russia, particularly the threat from information warfare, which was exhibited so substantially in the 2016 election.

The first part of the speech I gave on January 24 of this year, but let me briefly recap. As I described in my previous speech, Russia is prosecuting an ongoing, persistent campaign of information warfare targeted at the United States and Western democracies. These information operations are conducted along specific lines of effort and employ tactics, techniques, and procedures that Russia has developed over years of experimentation. Russia has been particularly effective in adapting its information warfare playbook to the digital age, weaponizing social media to magnify fear and mistrust, create chaos, and undermine our ability to respond effectively.

There are four steps we must adopt to more effectively counter Russian information warfare. First, we need the President to fulfill the obligations of his office and unite the American people in confronting this national security threat. Second, we need a coordinated strategy across our government and society to counter those threats.

Third, and flowing from the coordinated strategy, we need to ensure our government and society are organized and have the right capabilities to manage this ongoing confrontation in the information space. Finally, we need to develop, in coordination with our allies and partners, our own playbook to fight back.

Let me address each of these proposals in turn.

First of all, we need the President to be straight with the American people. The President's own national security officials and intelligence community agree about the existence and seriousness of the attacks being conducted by Russia against our democracy. The President, as our Nation's leader, must embrace the same conclusion. By conveying to the American people the urgency of this national security threat, the President can ensure that as a nation we are responding with the same level of commitment as we would to a military threat. This will elevate the urgency and gravity of the matter and help ensure we are committing the necessary level of resources for both military and nonmilitary measures to counter the Russian threat and build resilience against these malign activities.

Presidential leadership is necessary to help us move past domestic parochial politics. We have already seen how the failure to put national security over partisan politics all but decimated our ability to counter Russian information warfare during the 2016 election. The German Marshall Fund concluded in their policy blueprint from last year that "removing partisanship from the calculus in responding to this threat is critical." This is not a Democratic or a Republican problem. This is a national security problem, and it is severe. If we are going to overcome Russian efforts to magnify fear and distrust, we need our President to put our national security first.

Presidential leadership is just as imperative beyond our borders. The President speaks to the American people. His words must send a clear and consistent message to the Kremlin that we will not tolerate attacks against the United States. A real opportunity was missed when the President did not use his platform during the State of the Union to denounce Russian attacks on our democracy and showcase to the world the depth of his commitment in countering this threat.

The world must understand that the President is serious and committed to protecting the United States, its allies, and its partners against information warfare and will do so for as long as required. As a recent report by the Treasury Department on efforts by the United States to combat illicit finance noted: "Russia must . . . realize that the United States and its allies will not waver in our determination to prevent it from undermining our democracies, economies, institutions, and the values on which these pillars of global sta-

bility—ensured by United States leadership—will continue to stand."

The President should heed his own administration's guidance. He should do so publicly and with the resolve expected of the Commander in Chief.

Unfortunately, the President's history on this subject to date is far from encouraging. His policy positions do not follow dictums outlined by the Treasury Department and others in his administration but, instead, mirror Russian strategic objectives. His foreign policy goals and those of Russia seem to overlap. The President's devastating threats to withdraw from NATO and his denigration of the European Union, our trading partners, and those he considers his domestic political adversaries create or exacerbate internal divisions. The President must be made to realize that Russia supports his approach to foreign relations and domestic politics.

The President is, of course, by no means alone in demonizing those with whom he disagrees, but his voice is far more powerful as a result of the office he holds, and it is his obligation and duty to lead. Not only must the President distinguish his policy positions from those that Russia promotes overtly and through disinformation campaigns to tear up the fabric of the West, he must wholeheartedly reject those tactics and defend our Nation against them.

The President needs to get on the same page with much of the rest of the U.S. Government and Congress. The heads of the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Director of National Intelligence all came together to send a tough message to Russia ahead of the 2018 midterm elections. Congress has been united, as well, as evidenced by the overwhelmingly bipartisan passage of the Russia sanctions bill as part of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act or CAATSA.

Yet this tough messaging to Russia is completely undermined when the President fails to confront Putin over Russian malign activities and, instead, repeatedly downplays the significance of Russian interference with our democracy and society.

It is further undermined when he mirrors Putin's talking points and dismisses the Russian nationals indicted by the special counsel, including 12 Russian military intelligence or GRU agents, as merely "bloggers from Moscow." It is further undermined when the administration unwinds sanctions against a business of Putin crony Oleg Deripaska. I would note that this deal went forward in spite of bipartisan action in the Congress to try to block it. The President's mixed messages and failure of leadership in mounting sustained and credible deterrence must end.

Despite the lack of Presidential leadership, there is work underway to counter Russian hybrid warfare—and