

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 38.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Kenneth D. Bell, of North Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of North Carolina.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

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

The senior assistant 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, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Kenneth D. Bell, of North Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of North Carolina.

Mitch McConnell, Roy Blunt, Joni Ernst, Steve Daines, Roger F. Wicker, John Thune, Thom Tillis, John Kennedy, John Boozman, Pat Roberts, Mike Rounds, John Cornyn, Richard Burr, John Barrasso, Lindsey Graham, Cindy Hyde-Smith.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

IRAN

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, years before President Trump moved to the White House, even before President Obama and his family lived there, our Nation was at odds with an isolated country ruled by a repressive leader. It wasn't long before it became clear to the United Nations and to our country's own intelligence community that the country I am speaking of was enriching uranium for the purpose of obtaining a nuclear weapon, threatening to destabilize a region of great strategic importance.

As the world was winding down from a cold war, tensions between the United States and this country were heating up. An administration that some would call naive recently attempted to deescalate tensions, taking an unprecedented step to hold out an olive branch to an unpredictable regime in hopes of reaching a momentous agreement to stop them from continuing to enrich uranium. Surprisingly, that President trusted and was willing to give unprecedented concessions, all without any reliable mechanism to verify whether the nuclear enrichment had indeed ended.

My Republican colleagues would be surprised to hear me say this today, especially today, a week after the anniversary of the U.S. decision to pull out

of the Iran nuclear deal. They are right to be surprised because I am not talking about Iran; I am talking about North Korea. I am not talking about President Barack Obama; I am talking about Donald Trump.

Donald Trump was willing to sit down with a criminal dictator and give away unprecedented concessions in the hopes that North Korea would abandon its nuclear program. On the other hand, he turned his back on Iran, a large country with a growing moderate population—roughly 75 million people, the majority of which, the last I checked, are under the age of 25—and a moderate President. Let me be really clear. There are some bad actors in Iran, and some of them are in powerful positions. But, unfortunately, the actions of this administration, unlike the actions of the last administration, the Obama administration—here is what they sought to do. They sought to diminish the extremists, the hardliners, and their sway over what happens in Iran and at the same time bolster a new generation of Iranians who are growing up, who are more moderate in nature and, frankly, who would like to have a better relationship with our country. Sadly, President Trump turned his back on Iran and looked forward to taking a different course—a different course for sure.

Unlike North Korea, Iran committed 2 years ago to unprecedented, invasive inspections under a deal called JCPOA. On July 14, 2015, after years of careful preparation, the Obama administration began implementing the JCPOA with Iran and five negotiating partners—Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and China—in an effort to end Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons for years and, possibly, if we are lucky, forever. The deal was not based on trust; it was based on mistrust—mistrust.

There is a Ronald Reagan line that says: "Trust, but verify." That is not the underlying principle with the Iran deal, the JCPOA. It is mistrust, but verify. That is the theme that underlies the JCPOA.

Under that agreement, Iran was required to end uranium enrichment for nuclear purposes and would be subject to invasive inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA. To the surprise of many, they had apparently held up their end of the bargain until now.

We pulled out of the JCPOA a year ago. Our other negotiating partners stayed in, and the IAEA recently certified for the 14th time in a row—I think in February of this year—that Iran has complied with the terms of the agreement, the letter and spirit of the agreement that we pulled out of a year ago. We are the only one who has pulled out of it to date. The IAEA itself says that the inspection regime laid out by this agreement, the JCPOA, is the world's toughest—the world's toughest.

Here is the bottom line. Because of the JCPOA, Iran is much further away

from developing a nuclear weapon today than it was before the deal was signed several years ago. However, as I said earlier, we have not held up our end of the bargain. One year ago, President Trump announced that this country would unilaterally leave the JCPOA, even though the IAEA certified for the 14th time in a row, this year, that Iran has complied with the terms of the agreement. But we pulled out, leaving our allies, who committed to the deal in good faith, in the lurch.

This decision we made, I think regrettably a year ago, had consequences. Instead of celebrating continued stability provided by the Iran nuclear deal last week, Iran's President, President Rouhani, announced that Iran will begin to end its compliance with some portions of the JCPOA, including by stockpiling enriched uranium and heavy water.

As I said at that time, President Trump's decision increased the odds of armed conflict with Iran while doing nothing to constrain their other malicious activities in the region. Again, make no mistake. Not everybody in Iran wants to be our friend. Mostly young people want to be our friends, and a lot of folks who have been elected to office over there would like to have a friendly, better relationship with this country. But there are some who do not, and I fully acknowledge that.

Today, thanks to President Trump's appointment of John Bolton to be our National Security Advisor—the President's National Security Advisor—we are seeing that prediction come truer than I could have imagined.

Last month, the Trump administration designated the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a foreign terrorist organization, further antagonizing Iran. Members of the Trump administration are reportedly mulling over a plan to refuse to issue sanctions waivers to our European allies who intend to purchase oil from Iran, and the administration has reportedly drawn up plans to send 120,000 of our troops to the Middle East in response to alleged increased threats from Iran. But our allies in the region and around the world, including the French, the Brits, and the Germans, say that they have seen no such threat. All of this is happening in the absence of a Senate-confirmed Secretary of Defense.

Earlier this week, I was out for a run a couple of miles from here. If you run from the Capitol down to the Lincoln Memorial and then turn around and sort of head back this way, you run by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Whenever I run alongside the memorial, I take my left hand, and with my fingers, I touch the names of 55,000 men and women who died in that war. I served with them. I am the last Vietnam veteran serving in the Senate. They died, and many of us risked our lives over a war that was based—really, premised—on an untruth; some would say a lie.