

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING
BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert L. King, of Kentucky, to be Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education, Department of Education.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed as in morning business.

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

CHINA

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I call to the Senators' attention today a disturbing article in the June 29, 2019, issue of *The Economist*, on pages 36 and 37. It is about the military buildup in China and the way it affects the United States. It says:

Xi Jinping wants China's armed forces to be "world class" by 2050. He has done more to achieve this than any of his predecessors.

I will quote from the lead of this article in *The Economist*.

Over the past decade, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been lavished with money and arms. China's military spending rose by 83 percent in real terms between 2009 and 2018, by far the largest growth spurt in any big country. The splurge has enabled China to deploy precision missiles and anti-satellite weapons that challenge American supremacy in the western Pacific. China's leader, Xi Jinping, says his "Chinese dream" includes a "dream of a strong armed forces". That, he says, involves "modernising" the PLA by 2035 and making it "world-class"—in other words, America-beating—by mid-century. He has been making a lot of progress.

In the second column of this article, it goes on to say:

He has done more in the past three years to reform the PLA than any leader since Deng Xiaoping.

This quote is not from some advocate of defense spending but is from one of the leading publications, *The Economist*.

I say to my colleagues, we need to be mindful of the threat that is arising to the United States from around the globe—not only from China, as I have just read, but also from Vladimir Putin's Russia, from Iran, and from international terrorism. There is a deteriorating security situation in almost every sector of the globe. The fact that the United States has always been super supreme and able to defend

the free peoples of this world is being challenged. We can no longer assume that any war would never be a fair fight. That has been the goal of the United States if we have to go to war. And we want to avoid war. But the best way, in our judgment, as a national strategy down through the decades, to avoid conflict of any kind is to make sure that if America ever gets in a fight, it will not be a fair fight; it will be a fight where we have overwhelming superiority, so no one will dare challenge the sea lanes and the freedom that we stand for in the United States of America. That is being challenged today.

I would submit to you that it is a good time for the United States to point out that we passed the National Defense Authorization Act—the NDAA—on a huge bipartisan basis. It was 80-something votes to 8. It is just unbelievable, the way we came together under the leadership of Chairman INHOFE and Ranking Member REED, his Democratic counterpart, working together as professionals, as legislators, and as Americans to send a strong statement that we need to go from the \$700 billion that was spent last fiscal year to \$750 billion to give our troops the pay raise they need, to recognize the sacrifice they have made, and to give our military—the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines—the tools they need, the equipment they need, and the innovation and manufacturing they need to get us where we need to go.

We went through a 7- or 8-year period when—we ought to all be ashamed because our fingerprints are all on it, those of us who were in office at the time. The distinguished Presiding Officer was not a Member of the Senate at that time, but those of us who were, we got our fingerprints on it, Republicans and Democrats. Somehow, try though we might, say what we might, we were unable to prevent sequestration from happening—an unthinkable result. The military branches couldn't believe this was happening and couldn't believe Congress would be so irresponsible, but somehow we were.

We have righted the ship over the past 2 years. It would be unthinkable to me, my fellow Americans, after making the progress to get back on the right track and return to responsible defense spending and responsible stewardship of our national security, if somehow we heeded some voices we have been hearing in Washington, DC, and around the country during the past few days about a continuing resolution, perhaps—maybe a continuing resolution of an entire year. The thinking there is, well, we just do a continuing resolution, and that will amount to level spending, and we can live with that.

I just left a hearing on the confirmation of GEN Mark Milley as the next, I hope, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I asked him about that. Would a continuing resolution simply

be level spending, and might we be able to live with that? And he absolutely made the point which we all know if we study the law. It is way more than level spending. It stops innovation. It stops the new starts. It stops everything that we planned in the NDAA, which we passed with an overwhelming bipartisan vote, and it makes it against the law for the shipbuilders to do anything new and for the people working on our next-generation aircraft to do anything new. It stops them in their tracks. It creates uncertainty in every branch of the military. And then we have to pay millions and billions to get back going again. It is an unthinkable result. Surely we can avoid that as Republicans and Democrats.

Let me quote now-retired Secretary Mattis. When he was asked about this very subject on a recent occasion, Secretary Mattis said this:

I cannot overstate the impact to our troops' morale from all this uncertainty. The combination of rapidly changing technology, the negative impact on military readiness resulting from the longest continuous stretch of combat in our Nation's history, and insufficient funding have created an overstretched and under-resourced military.

According to Secretary Mattis, "Under continuing resolutions, we actually lose ground."

We need a budget deal. We need a 2-year budget deal, as we have had in the past. Give our defense leaders, the Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries, as well as the ones who put on the uniform and agreed, for a career, to put themselves in harm's way—give them the certainty they need in order to defend against the threats *The Economist* talked about and the threats General Mattis talked about. Give them that certainty.

A new CR—a continuing resolution—would prevent us from having that certainty. It would delay maintenance for the *Harry S. Truman* aircraft carrier. It would prevent a guided missile frigate program we already authorized from even starting. This would happen September 30 if we go to a continuing resolution. It would cripple research and development, and it would prevent the Pentagon from aligning its funding with upcoming priorities.

We need to realize a fact of life around here. I didn't exactly get my way in the election last November. If I had my druthers, the House of Representatives would have remained in Republican hands, with a Republican Speaker and a Republican Chair. The voters, in their wisdom, decided to vote for divided government last November.

Our team was elected to continue leadership in the U.S. Senate. The Democratic team was elected to leadership in the House of Representatives. And I can assure you, if I were writing a defense appropriations bill, which is half of discretionary spending, and all of the other appropriations bills, which is so-called nondefense discretionary, it would look far different from the bill