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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Honorable PAT ROBERTS, a Senator from the State of Kansas.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Father of all, in a world where each new day seems to bring the chaotic and unexpected, we praise You that You are the same yesterday, today, and forever. Lord, You are our help in ages past. You are our hope for years to come. Give us this day wisdom to know Your words and obey Your precepts. May we show our gratitude with obedience because You have demonstrated Your might, wisdom, and love throughout the days of our earthly pilgrimage.

As our lawmakers follow Your lead, may they trust You to carve tunnels of hope through mountains of despair. Give our Senators the courage to embrace integrity with a clear conscience. May they not retreat from life's battles but faithfully keep their hands in Yours.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 3, 2020.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable PAT ROBERTS, a Senator from the State of Kansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. ROBERTS thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The distinguished Senate majority leader is recognized.

IRAQ

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning, Iran's master terrorist is dead. The architect and chief engineer of the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism has been removed from the battlefield at the hand of the U.S. military. No man alive was more directly responsible for the deaths of more American servicemembers than Qasem Soleimani, the leader of the Quds Force within Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Soleimani's schemes and his agents killed hundreds of American servicemembers in Iraq and Afghanistan. He personally oversaw the state-sponsored terrorism that Iran used to kill our sons and daughters. As we have seen in recent days and weeks, he and his terrorists posed an ongoing and growing threat to American lives and American interests.

Soleimani made it his life's work to take the Iranian revolutionary calls for "Death to America" and "Death to Israel" and turn them into action, but this terrorist mastermind was not just a threat to the United States and Israel. For more than a decade he mas-

terminded Iran's malevolent and destabilizing work throughout the entire Middle East. He created, sustained, and directed terrorist proxies everywhere from Yemen to Iraq, to Syria, to Lebanon. Innocents were killed. These sovereign countries were destabilized.

In Syria this leading terrorist and his agents acted as strategists, enablers, and accomplices to Bashar al-Assad's brutal repression and the slaughter of the Syrian people.

In Iraq, his violence expanded Iran's influence at the expense of the Iraqis themselves. His dark, sectarian vision disenfranchised countless Sunni Arabs and paved the way for the rise of ISIS.

With ISIS largely defeated, Soleimani and his agents again turned their sights on controlling the Iraqi people, who through massive protests are rejecting not only a corrupt government but also Iran's influence over that government. Once again, there were Iran and its proxies facilitating violence against these peaceful protesters.

For too long this evil man operated without constraint, and countless innocents have suffered for it. Now his terrorist leadership has been ended.

Predictably enough, in this political environment, the operation that led to Soleimani's death may prove controversial or divisive. Although I anticipate and welcome a debate about America's interests and foreign policy in the Middle East, I recommend that all Senators wait to review the facts and hear from the administration before passing much public judgment on this operation and its potential consequences.

The administration will be briefing staff today on the situation in Iraq. We are working to arrange a classified briefing for all Senators early next week.

For my part, I have spoken to the Secretary of Defense, and I am encouraged by the steps the U.S. military is taking to defend American personnel

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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