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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our Nation needs Your mercy. The challenges are too great to be met with mere human ingenuity. You have been our protection. Shelter us until the violent storms are passed. Let Your glory shine on Your lawmakers. May their thoughts, words, and deeds prompt people to glorify You. Inspire our Senators to place their confidence completely in You. Eternal God, You are our salvation. We will trust and not be afraid, for You are our strength and song.

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 7, 2020.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

IRAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I spoke yesterday about President Trump's decision to remove the chief architect of Tehran's terrorism from the battlefield, and I discussed the Senate's obligation to approach this in a manner that is serious, sober, and factual.

It is right for Senators to want to learn more about the President's major decision. Once again, I encourage all of our colleagues to attend the classified briefing which the administration will provide tomorrow. The Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the CIA Director will give a classified context behind the President's decision, and they will discuss the administration's strategy to protect our personnel and defend our Nation's interests in the new landscape. I would ask every Senator on both sides to bring an open mind to this briefing.

In particular, we should all remember that the history of Iranian aggression began long, long before this news cycle or this Presidency. In the decades since the Islamic revolution of 1979, as the White House has changed parties and our administrations have changed strategies, Tehran's simmering anti-American hatred, proxy violence, and steady support for terrorism worldwide have remained entirely constant through all of these years.

In effect, Iran has been at war with the United States for years. While it has taken pains to avoid direct con-

flict, Iran's authoritarian regime has shown no compunction about kidnapping, torturing, and killing Americans since its earliest days—or Iraqis or fellow Iranians, for that matter. From the 52 diplomatic personnel held hostage in Tehran for 444 days back in 1979, to the hundreds of U.S. servicemembers killed in bombings carried out by Iran's proxies—Beirut in 1983, Riyadh in 1995, Khobar in 1996—to the hundreds more killed or maimed in Iraq by the explosives and indirect fire attacks ordered by General Soleimani himself, to the constant flows of resources and equipment that prop up despots and terrorist organizations throughout the region, Iran's game plan has been an open book: Use third-party terrorism to inflict death and suffering on its enemies while avoiding direct confrontation.

The threat Iran poses is, certainly, not new. Its violence is not some unique reaction to President Trump or to Prime Minister Netanyahu or to any other current leader. Violence runs in the bloodstream of this evil regime.

In particular, our colleagues who apparently want to blame President Trump for Iranian provocative foreign policy should reflect on the previous administration's recent history.

Iran exploited President Obama's withdrawal from Iraq. Soleimani and his agents filled the void and dramatically expanded Iranian influence inside Iraq. They were able to impose a sectarian vision on Iraq that disenfranchised the Sunnis, fueled the rise of ISIS, and plunged the region into chaos.

Over in Syria, more weakness from the Obama administration opened yet another door for Iran. The Democratic administration failed to confront the Iranian-backed Assad regime as it slaughtered literally hundreds of thousands of Syrians and displaced millions more. Once again, amid the chaos, Soleimani worked and thrived.

Of course, all of this was the backdrop for the brazen, legacy-shopping

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



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