

would urge the administration and all of us to accede to a truly ambitious vaccination schedule and motivate the newly assembled team at the White House to achieve it and to provide the resources that they may need from Congress in order for them to execute that plan. There is no reason to stick to a goal we were on track to meet before President Biden was even sworn in.

President Biden, of course, ran a campaign criticizing the previous administration's handling of the COVID-19 virus, and he campaigned on the promise to lead us out of that crisis. But this modest goal is not going to get us there fast enough.

Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston say we need to be vaccinating 3 million people a day. That is double the pace we are seeing right now and triple the Biden administration's self-described ambitious plan.

The past year has been full of scientific developments and bold action by Congress and the administration to develop and distribute vaccines to the American people. We simply can't afford to put it in cruise control now. Our only option is to mobilize every resource and to push as hard and as fast as we can to get the American people vaccinated and to finally bring an end to this pandemic.

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.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

YEMEN

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, this is a screen shot from a video taken during a school field trip on August 9, 2018. These are Yemeni schoolchildren going to school in a northern governorate inside the country, and they are on their way either to or back from a picnic that they were having with their classmates.

As you can see, they are schoolchildren of elementary age—around 8, 9, 10 years old. They don't look any different than what school children here in the United States would look like on their way to a fun-filled school field trip. There is a little boy catching a little nap somehow amidst all of the den of the rest of his classmates so excited.

They are excited because there isn't and there wasn't a lot of fun to be had for schoolchildren in Yemen today or in 2018. A civil war still plagues that country and plagues Yemeni children who are too often facing starvation and disease, but on this day, there was fun to be had.

This is that schoolbus hours later. Forty children died when a U.S.-made

bomb dropped from the sky and hit this schoolbus. Not every child on that bus died, miraculously, but 40 children on the bus and around the bus did. It was a war crime.

The Saudis, in the aftermath of the incident, defended it saying that it was a legal action. They were targeting enemy leaders who were responsible for recruiting and training young children.

They hit a schoolbus in the middle of the day, right next to a crowded marketplace. It wasn't on a lonely road. It was in a crowded area. It is why not only people on the bus died, but children and families surrounding the bus died as well.

This was a military strike done, in part, as part of a coalition campaign of which the United States is a member. It is not just that we sold the bomb that hit this bus. We participated and still do participate in this military campaign in a myriad of ways.

For years, we flew planes in the sky that put fuel into the Saudi and Emirati jets that dropped these bombs. We embedded U.S. personnel in the operations center that planned these bombing campaigns, and maybe, most importantly of all, we lent moral authority to the Saudi-led campaign inside Yemen.

But over the course of our time as a coalition partner with Saudi Arabia, the war in Yemen has been a national security apocalypse for the United States. Our bombs and our planes have been used to kill thousands of civilians; 17,000 civilians have died inside Yemen since the beginning of this war.

The war has caused the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe on the ground inside Yemen. Over 100,000 children have died of starvation and disease. Yemen, since 2015, has been the site of the world's worst cholera outbreak anywhere in the world during all of our lifetimes—likely caused by the targeting of water treatment facilities by the coalition, of which the United States is a member.

And inside this country, Yemenis rightfully blame the United States for this cataclysm. They know that it is our equipment, they know that it is our bombs, and they know that it is that moral authority that the United States gives to this war through our decision to continue to take part in it, human rights crime after human rights crime.

It has radicalized a generation of Yemenis against the United States. It has made us part and parcel of repeated human rights violations, and it has created a chaotic environment on the ground in Yemen that has allowed for AQAP, the wing of al-Qaida with the clearest designs to hit the United States, again, room to govern and room to grow. AQAP and ISIS are able to operate and control territory inside Yemen because of the chaos created by this civil war.

Iran has grown stronger. At the beginning, Iran and the Houthis, who are on the other side of this civil war, had

a slightly tenuous connection, but as the war has dragged on, the Houthis have had to become more and more reliant on Iranian assistance and Iranian expertise. Iran has grown stronger and stronger inside Yemen and inside the region as this war persists. In every way, it has been a nightmare, from a security perspective, for the United States.

But with the election and inauguration of President Biden, our participation in this national security cataclysm is coming to an end. I come to the floor today to thank the Biden administration and to thank the incoming Secretary of State, Tony Blinken, for their recognition that it is no longer in our security interest to be a part of this.

The Biden administration has made several very important decisions that they have announced at the outset of their term in office: one, the plan to withdraw from the military coalition; second, a decision to suspend arm sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, who are the primary participants in this coalition. UAE has dramatically scaled back their involvement—to their credit. The Saudis continue to fight this war on the ground and in the air.

And lastly—and, perhaps, most immediately importantly—the Trump administration announced that they were reserving an eleventh-hour decision by the Trump administration naming the Houthis a terrorist group.

Now, the Houthis are incredibly bad actors. The Houthis are also guilty of war crimes in and around this conflict. They recruit child soldiers. They deliberately hold up aid and don't allow it to get to the citizens in areas under which they control. The Houthis have a lot to answer for as well. But by naming them a terrorist group, what the Trump administration effectively did was to stop the international aid community from being able to deliver any aid into Yemen because the Houthis control some of the most important ports, and 80 percent of the aid is commercial food. That would have all stopped if you couldn't run aid through ports controlled by an organization named at the eleventh hour by the Trump administration as a terrorist organization.

The Biden administration has made a decision to suspend that designation to make sure that we are not going to end up with millions of people starving inside Yemen because the United States makes the decision to eliminate the ability of humanitarian groups to get food on the ground in Yemen. They are all incredibly important decisions that the administration has made—decisions supported by a majority of this body.

We have voted here in the Senate, on a bipartisan basis, to end the U.S. participation in the war in Yemen. We didn't have a veto-proof majority. So we couldn't overcome the President's veto. But there is a bipartisan coalition that believes the United States

shouldn't have anything to do with this, and President Biden is now effectuating that bipartisan consensus in policy.

Lastly, let me say this. Saudi Arabia is an important security partner for the United States. The UAE is an important security partner for the United States. We have an important counterterrorism relationship. The Saudis and the Emirates have been part of this groundbreaking detente with Israel, resulting in several recognition agreements. That is great for U.S. security interests in the region. But it is time for us to reset those relationships to make clear that if our Gulf partners are going to participate in actions inside the region that are terrible for our security interests, then we can't join them in those actions—a reset that includes an expectation that the Saudis and the Emirates address what is a very disturbing downward trend in the ability of individuals inside those countries to have political space with which to contest grievances with the regimes.

It is time for us to make sure that our relationships with our Gulf allies are always consistent with U.S. national security endeavors, and the Biden administration is off to a very good start in resetting those relationships by pulling ourselves out of a war inside Yemen that has killed 17,000 civilians, caused 100,000 kids to die of starvation and disease, and ends up with our bombs doing this to a school bus full of 8-, 9-, and 10-year-olds.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Iowa.

NOMINATION OF ALEJANDRO NICHOLAS MAYORKAS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the Senate is considering the nomination of Mr. Mayorkas to serve as Secretary of Homeland Security. I come to the floor at this point, before we vote on that motion today, to raise questions about whether or not he should be in that position as Secretary of Homeland Security and the fact that I will be voting negative.

I am familiar with Mr. Mayorkas from my past oversight of the EB-5 investment visa program. From 2009 until 2013, Mr. Mayorkas served as Director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, which administers that EB-5 visa program.

During that time, more than 15 whistleblowers approached my office to raise questions about Mr. Mayorkas and his management of the EB-5 program. The whistleblowers allege that Mr. Mayorkas was intervening in routine and technical matters that were not typically handled by the Director of that Division. They also alleged that he was doing so at the request of well-connected Democratic politicians and other politically connected stakeholders.

As my colleagues are aware, I have long criticized the fraud and abuse that

are rampant in the EB-5 program, and I have continually reintroduced bipartisan legislation with Senator LEAHY to reform the program. So it shouldn't be a surprise to any of my colleagues that when I hear from 15 different whistleblowers anything about the EB-5 program, I would further investigate it.

I have also conducted consistent oversight of the EB-5 program across Presidential administrations, whether they were Democrat or Republican. So when whistleblowers approach my office with these serious allegations, as I said before, I am determined to get to the bottom of these matters.

One of the cases in which whistleblowers said Mr. Mayorkas had intervened involved a company with ties to former Secretary Clinton's brother, Anthony Rodham.

Mr. Rodham's company wasn't happy with the speed with which its applications were being conducted by the Customs and Immigration Service, so company representatives made repeated inquiries to the Department of Homeland Security and Mr. Mayorkas. And they did this in an effort to get Mr. Mayorkas to speed things up.

My investigation found that between 2010 and 2013, Mr. Mayorkas had nearly a dozen contacts with that company, including direct communications with its attorneys. Mr. Mayorkas forwarded requests from the company along to his team, marking at least one of those forwarded messages as "high priority." He became heavily involved in the process of revising a draft of a technical decision from his Division's Administrative Appeals Office that was initially unfavorable to the company. So, because of his involvement, in the end, the opinion was rewritten in a manner that was much more favorable to Mr. Rodham's company.

In 2013, I wrote Mr. Mayorkas five letters about his management of the EB-5 program. In those letters, I asked him detailed questions in order to get his side of the story, and when he didn't answer my initial questions, I wrote him repeatedly to follow up.

At this point, it has been more than 7 years, and I still have not received answers to more than 25 specific questions that I asked during that 2013 investigation.

Following his nomination to serve as Department of Homeland Security Secretary, I wrote to Mr. Mayorkas again on January 15 to raise my concerns and to provide him yet another opportunity to answer my questions. He sent me a very short response on January 19 that—can you believe this?—still failed to answer most of the questions that I was trying to get answers for.

It is very important for nominees confirmed by this body to be responsive to congressional oversight requests. Mr. Mayorkas consistently refused to respond to my questions, and that should concern all of us in the U.S. Senate because no Senator should be denied answers to his questions doing

proper oversight of the executive branch.

Furthermore, we now know that many of the whistleblower allegations made to my office were accurate. Many whistleblowers who approached my office raised similar concerns with John Roth, the Obama-appointed inspector general at the Department of Homeland Security at that time, who released his office's report detailing its investigation into these matters way back in 2015.

In that 2015 report, Inspector General Roth found that "employees' belief that Mr. Mayorkas favored certain politically powerful EB-5 stakeholders was reasonable." That is the end of quote of the inspector general's report.

The IG also said that the number and variety of witnesses who came forward in his investigation was "highly unusual." Allegations didn't come from one or two disgruntled employees, according to the inspector general; they came from current and retired career and noncareer members of the Senior Executive Service, as well as all levels of supervisors, immigration officers, attorneys, and employees involved in fraud detection and in national security.

According to Inspector General Roth, the fact "[t]hat so many individuals were willing to step forward and tell . . . what happened [was] evidence of deep resentment about Mr. Mayorkas's actions related to the EB-5 program." That is the end of quote from the IG report.

The IG also found that Mr. Mayorkas's actions "created an appearance of favoritism and special access" in some EB-5 adjudication matters and that he "created specific processes and revised existing policies in the EB-5 program to accommodate specific parties."

In addition to the case involving Mr. Rodham's company, other cases reviewed by the inspector general involved well-connected Democrats, including former Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell and then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

In each of the cases reviewed by the inspector general where Mr. Mayorkas had intervened, the IG found that "but for Mr. Mayorkas's intervention, the matter would have been decided differently."

Witnesses were also fearful, and some only spoke to the IG after being assured of anonymity. One whistleblower told my office they were extremely uncomfortable in meetings with Mr. Mayorkas.

Mr. Mayorkas's actions raised serious concerns in 2013 when he was nominated to serve as Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security during President Obama's second term. It is why he couldn't be confirmed to that role until after then-Majority Leader Harry Reid invoked the nuclear option on nominations. Not a single Republican Senator was willing to support his confirmation then, and no Senator should support it at this time.