

wounded, thousands and thousands grievously wounded. Our fighting men and women did a yeoman's job. They made us proud. But was that war necessary? In hindsight, it appears to me it wasn't. Not only have we lost thousands of American lives, it has destabilized the whole Middle East and hundreds of thousands—hundreds of thousands—hundreds of thousands—hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have been killed. They are now gone.

But there are some pushing hard in Congress to authorize use of military force right now—right now. Dick Cheney was here yesterday. I guess that is whom they are following. But wouldn't it be a good idea for us to stand back a little bit and see what the President of the United States has to say tonight? He is addressing the Nation. Let's allow him to speak to our country, to our fellow citizens, and lay out his plan.

It is absolutely critical that the American people and Congress hear directly from the President of the United States.

In the Senate we are going to have an all-Senators briefing tomorrow afternoon. The administration will come to one of our classified rooms in the Capitol complex and lay out to us in detail what is going on that is not in the news. So every Member of this body will have a chance to get as much information as possible. The President speaks tonight. Tomorrow afternoon there is a briefing.

It is clear—the President has said so publicly, his administration has said so publicly, and the officials who work directly with the White House—he is doing his utmost. He just returned from Europe and much of the time that was spent there in the NATO conference was about what they are going to do to go after this evil in the Middle East, this ISIS group. He is doing his utmost to build a robust international coalition including the Sunni Arab States.

For this mission to be successful, of course, Sunni Arab countries must play a role and they will do that. That is being worked on as we speak.

It is clear to me that we need to train and equip Syrian rebels and other groups in the Middle East that need some help. It is called title 10 authority. The rebels have tried to get it from us and they should get it. That is our way of building an international coalition. Congress should do that. The Republicans are worried about money. There is money to do that. The chairman of the Armed Services Committee is on the floor and he can certainly vouch for that. It would give authority for the President to help equip these rebels.

Going it alone is not going to work. We must have the support of the international community if we are to rid the world of ISIS. We know France—I at least believe that—has stepped forward, I believe Great Britain has stepped forward, I understand Poland is

part of the coalition that has stepped forward, and there are many other countries the President met with in Europe just a few days ago. We need to build a coalition, and that is what he is doing, rather than declaring war today. Title 10 authority is something we need.

I repeat. Going it alone will not suffice. I also believe that as Commander in Chief the President has the authority he needs now to act against ISIS. I believe the vast majority of the Members of Congress agree with that. Now it is critical we support our Commander in Chief as he takes this decisive action. I am amazed—amazed—that some Members of Congress want to rush to war, because that is what they are talking about is a war. How did that work out for us last time? Not so well. The Bush-Cheney strategy of rushing into conflict didn't work then and it will not work now. Let's be cautious and let's be deliberate.

I repeat. Former Vice President Cheney was here yesterday giving the Republicans a pep talk. He gave them advice on foreign policy. Please—please—taking advice from Dick Cheney on foreign policy, that is a terrifying prospect. We should be learning from our past mistakes, not repeating them.

Air strikes and strategic use of drones and of course covert action are the most effective ways to take out ISIS without committing American troops, placing troops in harm's way. So I support President Obama's decision not to send in ground troops. That is not an option for the American people. I can guarantee everyone that within the sound of my voice.

But now that the Republicans are taking advice from Dick Cheney on foreign policy, I am concerned they once again will rush to commit U.S. troops to a ground war in the Middle East when we could accomplish the mission in a more strategic way.

I say to Democrats and Republicans, let's destroy these despicable terrorists, but let's do it the right way this time. The President knows and the American people know we have to take decisive action. The President knows how to destroy terrorists and their organization. Osama bin Laden is proof of that.

Let's give the President of the United States the time to do this the right way. Troops are out there defending us as we speak. They are not Democrats. They are not Republicans. They are not Independents. They are fighting for us to protect Americans. We need committed, decisive action to stop ISIS.

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#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

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#### MIDDLE EAST STRATEGY

Mr. McCONNELL. Last month I got to spend a lot of time with the people

of Kentucky, and since there has been no shortage of issues to keep people up at night over the past few months, I got a lot of straight talk on a lot of topics. I heard a lot about the crisis at the border, about lost health care plans, the chronic shortage of good jobs, stagnant wages, even Ebola, the spread of which is a threat that must be taken seriously.

Yet one issue that kept coming up is America's role in the world and the growing sense that some in Washington are more or less content to let others shape our destiny for us. For many that concern was crystallized when they witnessed the barbaric execution of an American citizen by an ISIL terrorist and the halting reaction to it by a President who has yet to find his footing when it comes to dealing with this group that clearly has the will, the means, and the sanctuary it needs to do more.

Last week the White House announced that the President plans to explain the nature of the threat ISIL poses in a speech to the American people tonight. Well, after spending a month talking with folks in Kentucky, it is pretty clear—to me, at least—that the American people fully appreciate the nature of this threat. After the beatings of two American citizens, they don't want an explanation of what is happening, they want a plan. They want some Presidential leadership.

I hope the President lays out a credible plan to defeat ISIL. I hope he outlines the steps he intends to take beyond simply the defense of Baghdad, Erbil, Sinjar, and Amerli, and what legal authorities and resources he thinks are required to execute a successful campaign against ISIL. But the fact is the rise of ISIL is not an isolated failure. The spread of ISIL occurred in a particular context, and if we hope to defeat this threat, we need to come to terms with that now.

So before speaking with a little more specificity about ISIL and the ongoing threat of global terrorism, I would like to briefly restate my concerns about the consequences of the President's foreign policy, as I warned a few months ago, because ISIL's military advance across Syria and Iraq carries a much larger lesson—a lesson that should prompt the President to reconsider and revise his overall national security policy and better prepare the country and our military to confront the threats that will survive his time in office.

First, it is important to note a few of the consistent objectives that have always characterized this President's national security policy: drawing down our conventional and nuclear forces, withdrawing from Iraq and Afghanistan, and placing a greater reliance upon international organizations and diplomacy.

As I have noted on other occasions, I have serious differences with the President over this approach. In my view, we have a duty as a superpower without imperialistic aims to help maintain international order and balance of