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ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY,
JANUARY 20, 2016

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, January 20; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each until 12:30 p.m.; further, that the Senate recess from 12:30 p.m. until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly conference meetings; finally, that at 2:15 p.m. the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 4038, with the time until 2:30 p.m. equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator DURBIN.

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

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to thank the majority leader for giving me an opportunity to say a few words before we adjourn this evening.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, some months ago, in the midst of debate on the nuclear agreement with Iran, I came to the Senate floor to remind my colleagues of some recent history involving other negotiations undertaken with troubling regimes that turned out to serve our national security interests.

I reminded my Republican colleagues that John Kennedy negotiated with the Soviet Union during the Cuban missile crisis, saving us from nuclear war. I reminded them that Richard Nixon negotiated with the Chinese on normalizing relations, even while that Communist regime in China was providing weapons to the North Vietnamese, who were using them against American soldiers. I, of course, reminded them that Ronald Reagan negotiated with the Soviets while the Communist nation had thousands of nuclear weapons pointed at the United States, was occupying Eastern Europe, and was supporting troubling regimes around the world.

Let us also recall how many on the right in the political spectrum savaged then President Reagan for negotiating with the Soviets on nuclear arms. Let me read an excerpt from the January 17, 1988, New York Times about the opposition—eerily familiar to what we have been hearing in the debate on the Iran nuclear agreement—Reagan faced in negotiating an arms agreement with the Soviets:

Already, right-wing groups . . . have mounted a strong campaign against the INF treaty. They have mailed out close to 300,000 letters opposing it. They have circulated 5,000 cassette recordings of Gen. Bernard Rogers, former Supreme Commander of NATO, attacking it. And, finally, they are preparing to run newspaper ads this month savaging Reagan as a new Neville Chamberlain, signing an accord with Hitler and glibly predicting "peace for our time."

Conservative Washington Post columnist George Will said in a 1987 Newsweek column of negotiating arms agreements with the Soviets, "Reagan has dramatically advanced the moral and psychological disarmament of the West by emphatically siding with those . . . who emphasize the role of ideology, and hence the radical differentness and dangerousness of the Soviet threat."

The conservative National Review's May 22, 1987, edition had the following cover entitled "Reagan's Suicide Pact" concerning Reagan's negotiation with the Soviets. While opposed by some at the time, few in this Chamber would look back today and say that these negotiations were a mistake or that the agreements that were reached between Reagan and the Soviets didn't actually serve long-term American national security interests.

So we are here today with the fulfillment of the first stage of a historic agreement between world powers and Iran that has effectively eliminated that country's ability to build a nuclear weapon—a weapon that could have threatened our close allies and the world.

Only a few months after this agreement was reached, Iran has met its critical commitments. It destroyed its only source of weapons-grade plutonium by literally pouring concrete into the heart of the reactor. It shipped 98 percent of its low-enriched uranium, at least 25,000 pounds—some 12 tons—of this low-enriched uranium out of the

country. Recall that thanks to the interim agreement, Iran had already shipped out all of its more dangerous highly enriched uranium. It dismantled and removed two-thirds of its centrifuges—thousands of its centrifuges—and it has allowed international inspectors unprecedented access to its nuclear facilities and supply chain.

A simple question to the critics of the Iran nuclear agreement: Today, is Iran closer or further away from the development of a nuclear weapon? The answer is that it is further away. There is no other reasonable conclusion.

Do you remember the speeches given by Prime Minister Netanyahu and many of the critics of this agreement? They were telling us that Iran was weeks away from developing a nuclear weapon. Now by consensus we believe they are at least 1 year away from developing a nuclear weapon if they completely walked away from this agreement. Without a nuclear weapon, Iran is not the same kind of threat to the Middle East, Israel, or to the world.

All of what I said has been verified by international inspectors. Do you recall Ronald Reagan reminding us to trust but verify? We verified. The agreement gives inspectors continued access in perpetuity. In a few months, Iran has gone from a breakout time of a nuclear weapon from a month or 2 to at least 1 year. Quite simply, under Barack Obama's Iran nuclear weapon agreement, their program has finally been brought to a halt without firing a shot—something no previous administration had been able to accomplish. That such a difficult task was accomplished is a testament to the tireless work of our former colleague and current Secretary of State John Kerry and his team. This Senator thinks of all those who worked so hard on this for so many months to achieve it.

Tough diplomacy has also brought home a number of Americans who were unjustly held in Iran. These Americans had not even left Iranian airspace before many of the Republicans running for President unleashed another wave of worn-out rhetoric criticizing the President's effort that led to the release of these Americans being held prisoner. They also failed to offer a substantive alternative approach. Let me remind the naysayers that it was Ronald Reagan who traded weapons to Iran for seven American hostages being held by Iranian terrorists in Lebanon—not a handful of nonviolent sanctions violators but weapons to what was then our arch enemy who had only recently held more than 60 American diplomats as hostages for 444 days. By the time the sales were discovered, more than 1,500 missiles had been shipped by the Reagan administration to Iran and only 3 hostages had been released. They in turn were replaced with three more, sadly, in what then-Secretary of State George Shultz called "a hostage bazaar."

I have met the families of those held hostage, and I can't say what I would