

He was a loyal son. After speaking with Ryan's father Greg, it was clear the love and the commitment that SSG Ryan Knauss had for his family and his fellow soldiers was unwavering.

I can only tell you that after hearing of Ryan's dedication to his family and his country, it is the hope and prayer of every parent to have a son as honorable and principled as Ryan. As a father, I told Greg I couldn't fathom his grief.

Ryan had hoped to soon become a father himself. He and Alena had plans to try for their first child when he came back from overseas. And building a nursery was at the top of their to-do list when he was to arrive home.

Staff Sergeant Knauss was a steadfast friend. His own friend spoke of his charm and intelligence at a memorial service at his former high school in Corryton. He was a charismatic person to whom people were instantly drawn.

SSG Ryan Knauss was a proud and honorable soldier. And when his country needed him at such a dire time, he fiercely answered the call.

Even as a child, Ryan knew his calling was to serve. In a friend's elementary school yearbook, Ryan wrote that he wanted to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. And as a freshman in high school, he signed up for the ROTC program. As one of his fellow soldiers explained, "This was his dream job, and he . . . ran with it."

Ryan's unit, Detachment 10, described it as follows:

Ryan knew the dangerous situation he was going to, but protecting innocent civilians is one of the values that drove him. It has been said that life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives, and Ryan had an incredible impact on his family and friends. And thanks to his actions, thousands of children will have the joy of knowing a childhood free from danger and oppression.

The Bible teaches us that no one has "greater love than this, than to lay down one's life for one's friends." Staff Sergeant Knauss did just that. He died a hero's death. He made the ultimate sacrifice for his Nation, for all of us.

Ryan will be remembered as a selfless and heroic man—a Tennessee volunteer—who, with a servant's heart, gave everything of himself at just 23 years old for the country that he loved so dearly.

I ask that each of you here today join me in continuing to pray for the Knauss family and uplift them in the coming days and months as they lay their soldier to rest at Arlington National Cemetery.

#### AFGHANISTAN

Madam President, from the moment that President Biden announced the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan in April, the people of the United States—after two decades of war—had hoped to mark the end of our presence in Afghanistan with a secure and orderly exit and with our honor intact.

As we know, what ensued proved to be the opposite. Hubris fueled the administration to proceed with a flawed

exit plan from Afghanistan. They allowed a calendar to dictate our withdrawal rather than the conditions on the ground. Loss of life and humiliation have been the result, with our allies and our partners openly questioning the resolve and the competency of the United States.

Those harrowing images of Afghan teenagers falling from the sky after clinging to a U.S. military plane as it took off from the Kabul airport, the utter chaos at the gates of the Kabul airport, and the loss of 13 U.S. service-members, including Staff Sergeant Knauss, would compel any reasonable person to ask why events had to unfold in this manner.

Against the operational failure in Afghanistan and this loss of credibility abroad, we are fortunate in knowing that the people of the United States still retain their unique spirit—that American desire to come to the aid of others in need.

Those Americans stranded in Afghanistan, the former Afghan interpreters who stood with our military, Afghan women and children who worked with our aid organizations—these people needed our help, and our servicemembers, our diplomats, our aid workers, and journalists all deserve recognition and credit for their sacrifice as they attempted to help.

#### TRIBUTE TO STAFF

Madam President, I want to take this opportunity to highlight another group of Americans who rarely receive the public recognition they deserve, the staff right here in the U.S. Senate. These staffers shun the spotlight and dedicate their craft to represent the interests of our constituents.

When it became clear that the administration was failing in Afghanistan, congressional staffers from across Capitol Hill—from both parties in Washington and in State offices and district offices around the country—rose to the challenge. These staffers helped with a modern-day "Digital Dunkirk." They were united in the common cause of helping stranded Americans and Afghan allies. Many of them sprung to action instinctively and in an instant, almost as if they had been on call, like a doctor or a firefighter, immediately ready to help mitigate the damage of this disaster.

Some of those who did this work serve on my staff: Bobby Zarate, my national security advisor, spent countless hours engaging with counterparts in the State Department, communicating with Active-Duty military and veterans, including some on the ground in Afghanistan, and, of course, fielding requests from all corners to expedite cases of American citizens and allies in Afghanistan; Kevin Kim, a fellow in my office from the State Department; Rachel Leong, a legislative correspondent; and Bonny Warren, a case-worker in my Cookeville office. They were all right there, too, every step of the way.

For their work on behalf of folks in need, I want to thank them for all that they do and all they continue to do.

I imagine many of my colleagues here in the Senate have similar stories, their own Bobbys, their own Kevins, and Rachels, and Bonnys helping those in need. And for the totality of their work, we, the Members of the Senate, owe our staff a great thanks.

I am honored to describe the role that my office played and is continuing to play in rescuing Americans from Afghanistan, but it didn't have to be this way. And I hope, for the sake of our government and our country, that it will never be this way again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator MURPHY and I be allowed to complete our exchange before the next scheduled vote.

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

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2770

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, after Joe Biden's disastrous retreat from Afghanistan, the country has fallen to a medieval band of degenerate savages known as the Taliban.

Despite its depraved behavior, you won't hear anyone in our government call the Taliban what it is: a terrorist organization. Instead, Secretary of State Blinken has said, for example, that the Taliban "does not meet the test of inclusivity." It is as if the Biden administration is more concerned that the Taliban is led by men than that it is led by terrorists.

This administration has refused to declare that the Taliban is a foreign terrorist organization, perhaps because the President outsourced the security of American citizens to the Taliban last month and stood by as it took over a country of nearly 40 million people.

Once again, the Biden administration is putting image, public relations, before everything else. It refuses to acknowledge that the Afghan retreat was anything but an "extraordinary success," as Joe Biden has called it. And now it is refusing to call terrorists "terrorists."

But the truth is obvious. If the Taliban isn't a foreign terrorist organization, what is? The State Department's terrorism list includes groups like Shining Path, the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist guerillas in Peru, and Aum Shinrikyo, the Japanese doomsday cult.

If the State Department can go to the trouble of designating those groups as terrorist organizations, surely they can do the same for a band of jihadists whose hands are dripping with American blood.

Indeed, the Taliban matches to a tee the definition for foreign terrorist organization under U.S. law. That law sets out three criteria: First, it must be a foreign organization. I would assume the Biden administration would

concede even that point about the Taliban. Second, it must engage in terrorist activity. Has the Taliban engaged in terrorist activity? Countless victims of Taliban suicide bombings, targeted assassinations, IEDs, and acid attacks would surely answer yes to that question, if they survived those heinous crimes.

Consider the following as well: At least 14 of the Taliban's 33 so-called cabinet ministers are on the United Nations' sanctions list for terrorism. No fewer than five were once held with terrorists at Guantanamo Bay.

One of the most powerful factions of the Taliban is the murderous Haqqani Network—a twisted clan that the United States has already designated a terrorist organization under the Obama administration.

The Taliban has put the leader of the Haqqani Network in charge of the country's secret police and, yes, its immigration system, which is currently determining which persons can leave the country.

Sirajuddin Haqqani is one of America's most-wanted terrorists for attacking the U.S. Embassy in Kabul and hotels full of civilians, among other crimes.

It is also worth noting that the son of the Taliban's leader and so-called emir blew himself up in a suicide attack against the Afghan Government in 2017. Evidently, he thought the Taliban was a terrorist organization, even if some around Washington shrink from that label.

Finally, the third criterion for a foreign terrorist organization is that its terrorism must threaten the security of Americans or our national security.

With an estimated 100 Americans and thousands of green card holders currently trapped in Taliban-occupied Afghanistan, I would say the answer to that question is also obvious. It would still be obvious even if we didn't face an active hostage situation since the Taliban still provides safe haven to al-Qaida, who murdered thousands of Americans on September 11, 2001.

Despite the Taliban's empty promises that it would never again help al-Qaida, a recent United Nations report found that "the Taliban and al-Qaida remain closely aligned and show no indication of breaking ties." Al-Qaida continues to pledge allegiance to the Taliban, and its regional affiliate even operates under the Taliban banner in Kandahar. Now, that is a national security threat to America, if there ever was one.

So, to summarize, the Taliban is run by terrorists, it associates with terrorists, and it engages in terrorism. The Biden administration's refusal to call a spade a spade is a grave insult to the memory of the Taliban's victims and the tens of thousands of Americans who fought against it. It is worth remembering how many American lives the Taliban took, how many American warriors they maimed, and how many families they have shattered. That is terrorism.

So I will be asking unanimous consent for my bill, which would require Secretary Blinken to call the Taliban what they are—not a potential partner for Joe Biden, not a threat to inclusivity, but a terrorist organization.

Therefore, Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2770, which is at the desk; I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, reserving the right to object, how quickly my colleagues forget that it was President Trump who entered into negotiations with the Taliban. It was President Trump who entered into an agreement with the Taliban that committed the United States to withdraw our forces. It was President Trump who sold out women and girls in that country by refusing to put their interests first at that negotiating table. It was President Trump who elevated the Taliban in the international community by putting them face-to-face with our negotiators.

It is important to note, as to the specific request that is being made by the Senator from Arkansas, that right now, the Taliban is already designated as a designated global terrorist entity under Executive Order 13224. So they are already designated as a terrorist entity.

There are specific problems with this designation. First, I don't think it is a great idea for us to be designating FTOs by statute. There is a reason why we generally allow the administration to do this. But maybe more importantly, what comes with an FTO is the withdrawal of humanitarian organizations from the country at hand. We know that because we saw it in Yemen. When President Trump designated the Houthis as an FTO for about a week, humanitarian organizations started pulling up their stakes. Right now, there are 18 million Afghans who are in need of lifesaving humanitarian assistance. This is not the moment to take a step that will cause Afghans to starve.

The second reason not to do this this way is because, whether we like it or not, we are in communication through intermediaries with the Taliban to get our people out, to get our partners out. There are flights leaving on a regular basis. And to designate them as an FTO, in addition to the existing designation that the Taliban has as a specially designated global terrorist entity, is to risk our ability to continue to bring our people out.

We should be joined together as a Senate, despite the views we have on whether we should have stayed or left

Afghanistan, in our support for the Afghan people by making sure that we do not take steps to cut off humanitarian assistance to people in need and our belief that we should be supporting this administration in their effort to continue to get our partners out.

This designation done this way will risk both of those initiatives, and for that reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, I share my colleague's grave concerns about the humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan. I share his concerns about the fate of Americans and green card holders and their families and Afghans who fought alongside our troops who were also left behind in Afghanistan. Both of these crises—the humanitarian crisis and the crisis of Americans left behind Taliban enemy lines—are the responsibility of Joe Biden for his hapless, disorganized, chaotic execution of the withdrawal from that country.

I yield the floor.

#### VOTE ON STRICKLAND NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Strickland nomination?

Mr. HEINRICH. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California Mrs. (FEINSTEIN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 52, nays 45, as follows:

#### [Rollcall Vote No. 368 Ex.]

##### YEAS—52

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Reed
Bennet	Hirono	Rosen
Blumenthal	Kaine	Sanders
Booker	Kelly	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Sinema
Carper	Lujan	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Collins	Markey	Tester
Coons	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warnock
Durbin	Murphy	Warren
Gillibrand	Murray	Whitehouse
Graham	Ossoff	Wyden
Hassan	Padilla	
Heinrich	Peters	

##### NAYS—45

Barrasso	Crapo	Inhofe
Blackburn	Cruz	Johnson
Blunt	Daines	Kennedy
Boozman	Ernst	Lankford
Braun	Fischer	Lee
Capito	Grassley	Lummis
Cassidy	Hagerty	Marshall
Cornyn	Hawley	McConnell
Cotton	Hooven	Moran
Cramer	Hyde-Smith	Paul