

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

AMERICAN LEADERSHIP

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I know today we have been focusing on a really important bill, the CARA bill, which has been led by Senator PORTMAN, Senator AYOTTE, and many others. It is a very important bill for our country, for States like Alaska that are seeing this explosion of opioid use, heroin use, and drug addiction that is impacting so many families. I had the opportunity to talk about this, when I was home in Alaska last week down in Juneau, in front of our State legislature.

This legislation is showing bipartisan work, which is very important to the country and very important to States like Alaska. I am certainly proud to be a cosponsor of that bill. We are going to continue to try to get that over the goal line.

I think it is important to focus on issues not only domestically, of course, but issues beyond our borders as well. What I want to talk about in terms of these kinds of issues this afternoon is the issue of American leadership in the world today.

A lot of us in the Senate have experience in foreign policy and national security issues. There have been Members who have served in the State Department, decades in the military—the Presiding Officer has a lot of experience in international business—and so we have a fair amount of experience here. Certainly, it is part of our responsibilities under the Constitution, as Senators, to be very focused on these issues—these important issues of national security, of foreign policy. Attending hearings, codels, and meetings with foreign leaders are all part of our responsibilities.

One thing is very clear. Foreign policy and national security issues are almost always messy, complicated, never really have easy solutions, and are often very opaque in terms of what is happening in the world and how it impacts the United States. We recognize that. That is usually the case. But sometimes in the world of foreign policy, sometimes in the world of national security, there are moments of clarity when big issues come into focus. It doesn't happen often. It is rare. But when it happens, you know it. When it happens, you sense it.

I was recently part of a bipartisan congressional delegation led by one of the foremost experts on foreign policy and national security in the Senate, Senator JOHN MCCAIN. We all went to the Munich Security Conference in Munich, Germany. For over 50 years, this has been where leaders have come together—Americans, certainly, Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, Defense Ministers, international affairs experts—to discuss national security and foreign policy issues, usually as it relates to the Atlantic partnership—NATO, the EU.

My experience there led to one of these clarifying moments, and I think I am speaking for many of the people who were at Munich about 3 weeks ago. Here is the clarifying moment: The United States is withdrawing from its traditional leadership role in the world. Our allies know it, they feel it, and they are desperately worried about it.

In meeting after meeting, in speech after speech, if you were in Munich a month ago, listening, paying attention, discussing the state of the world's security with our allies, you heard it. You heard it. Sometimes it was subtle, sometimes it was direct, and, occasionally, it was even pleading—pleading from our allies, pleading for American leadership in the world again. We saw that.

One of the meetings we had was with an important leader of an important country in Europe. The Presiding Officer and I were there. At the end of the meeting, this leader was asked: What can the United States do to help your country in terms of security—aid, military cooperation? What can we do? This leader looked at a group of several Senators, bipartisan, and said: The United States has to lead in the world again. You are not leading, and the world is becoming a much more dangerous place because of the lack of American leadership. Whoever the next leader of your great country is, please tell that person that the United States has to lead again.

Think about that. That was the message. That was the message from Munich. Our friends are worried. They have certainly lost confidence in us, and our adversaries are taking advantage of the vacuum that we have left all around the world. That was the message of Munich, and anyone who went there heard it.

Now, I know some of my colleagues might be thinking: Well, this is a Republican Senator on the floor of the Senate, criticizing the Obama administration. That is probably a partisan criticism. But there were many people at Munich. There were Republicans and Democrats at Munich. Just a perusal of newspaper articles from those who went—and some who weren't there—shows that all are writing about the same issue—that one of the principal foreign policy issues facing the world, facing the United States right now, is what the lack of U.S. leadership globally is doing to the national security of our country and to that of our allies.

Let me just provide a few examples. Senator Joe Lieberman, who graced this body with his knowledge and expertise and wisdom for many, many years—a Democrat—was in Munich. Not too long after coming back, he wrote in the Washington Post:

The world has never seemed as dangerous and leaderless as it does now. Only the extremists and bullies act badly, and therefore have seized the initiative.

It's a moment in history that invokes the haunting words of W.B. Yeats: "The best

lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity."

That was Senator Lieberman, who was with us in Munich just a couple of weeks ago.

Former Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns, who has worked for Democrats and Republicans, was also there. I served under Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice with Under Secretary Burns—a great career foreign service officer. He also stated: "We are being humiliated. We've lost our strategic foothold"—he is talking about the Middle East—"and we've abdicated our leadership." That is not a Republican partisan saying that.

GEN John Abizaid—in my view one of the premier military leaders our country has seen in a generation, whom I had the honor of serving with as a marine major—recently stated: "Without American leadership, we're not going to move in a direction that's going to produce effective results."

There was another recent article in the Washington Post by another observer, an expert on foreign policy issues, Fred Hiatt, who wrote about what he saw at Munich. What he stated was that the endless negotiation by our Secretary of State "that perpetually, and falsely, holds out the prospect of imminent progress" on so many different issues ends up "providing cover" and "is an excuse for inaction," an "anesthetic," he said, where the Congress and the American people don't even have to feel about focusing on these issues, what is going on in the Middle East or the South China Sea or North Korea or the Korean Peninsula because we have endless diplomacy that covers it.

Finally, another participant in Munich, former Senator Bill Cohen, who worked as the Secretary of Defense for President Clinton, stated: "We no longer seem to know what our role should be in the new century."

He was interviewed on the radio a couple of weeks ago right after Munich:

Are we going to lead from behind? The truth is that President Putin has been bombing and the United States has been dithering.

That is former Secretary of Defense Bill Cohen, former U.S. Senator Bill Cohen.

It is very clear, whether you are Democratic or Republican, that anyone who spent time at the Munich security conference a few weeks ago came away with a similar conclusion: Our allies are extremely worried about what is clearly happening—the withdrawal of U.S. leadership from the world. They are seeing it, and we are seeing it in almost every region of the world. It is leaving a vacuum. Other countries that don't share our interests and don't share our values are filling that vacuum. We know the list. We have been debating it on this floor. Russia, certainly. Whether it is in the Middle East, Syria, Ukraine, the Arctic, Iran, the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism—our diplomats and Secretary of

State seem to spend more time with their diplomats and their Foreign Minister than almost any other country in the world—China and the South China Sea.

In the face of these challenges, we are also starting to see something that is truly alarming. The postwar structure, the national security structure of the world that the United States was instrumental in building, is beginning to crumble in different parts of the world.

So what should we do? What can we do? I think there is a lot we can do. We can certainly bolster the American-led order that was established after World War II. It certainly does not have to crumble. This is what our colleague Senator MCCAIN laid out in his outstanding speech in Munich. He talked about how this is one of our most important inheritances, this world order, this American-led order, and how we need to focus on it—not with speeches but with action.

What else can we do? We can look at the changing landscape of the world and see if we need to devise new political structures that address new challenges in places such as the Middle East, where borders seem to be being erased on a daily basis by terrorist groups like ISIS. This is something General Abizaid has written about recently.

Both of these alternatives require American leadership. They are not going to happen without the United States in the lead. If you went to Munich, you realize their allies want us to lead.

What can we do in the Senate? Well, we can certainly press for a more assertive and leading role for the United States of America from this body. The Constitution gives the U.S. Senate significant power in national security matters and foreign affairs, and we should be using that. We are using that.

Under the new leadership of the Senate, we have been moving forward in many areas of foreign policy and national security. There are the North Korea sanctions that were passed by this body 2 weeks ago, and now the world is following our lead on that. Senators GARDNER and CORKER did an outstanding job in that regard. There is the bipartisan approach to Ukraine that we see on the Armed Services

Committee. Every Member of that body, Democratic and Republican, thinks we should be doing more to help the Ukrainians defend themselves against Russian aggression. Afghanistan, the same thing—bolstering the need for troops there to guard America's security. The President has seemingly wanted to take all our troops out of there, as he wanted to do in Iraq, but again a bipartisan group of Senators have been questioning that strategy on a daily basis. In the South China Sea, we have been encouraging the administration to do what we have been doing for 70 years—conducting freedom of navigation operations to keep the seelanes of the world open. These are all things the Senate has been doing—in essence, trying to give this administration backbone, to assert the leadership we know is so important to our security and the security of the world.

But there is another thing, another option that might be out there. We can ignore the problem of what is happening in the world.

I hate to say this, but if you saw Secretary of State Kerry's speech in Munich, certainly compared to Senator MCCAIN's keynote address, what the Secretary of State seemed to be doing was that fourth option. He seemed to be saying: Hey, things aren't going that badly. Things in Syria aren't that bad.

He cautioned against pessimism and said that we have good reasons to be optimistic about what is happening. He talked about how fewer people are dying in conflict today than ever before. You literally heard a gasp in the audience in Munich when that was stated. That is not true.

What this does when you have the Secretary of State making these kinds of statements at important security conferences with all our allies, it further undermines the credibility of the United States in terms of foreign policy and national security.

We need to lead again. Our allies want us to. Most importantly, I believe the American people want us to.

Why? Why shouldn't we just withdraw from the world and let everything catch on fire? Bring the troops home and have the two oceans protect us—the Atlantic and Pacific.

We need to lead, and I believe the American people want the United States to lead because they know that

when the United States leads in the world, it is a safer place abroad and it is a safer place at home. They know what Senator Lieberman said recently in his op-ed after Munich: "The absence of American leadership has certainly not caused all the instability, but it has encouraged and exacerbated it." The American people also know that when there is a lack of U.S. leadership in the world, it not only turns to undermining our national security interests, but it turns to humiliation for our own citizens. Just think of the photos that we saw recently of U.S. sailors on their knees at Iranian gunpoint with their hands raised in surrender and what that does in terms of how Americans are thinking about our role in the world, the security of the world, and what is happening with regard to U.S. leadership. We have to change these policies of leading from behind.

I will conclude by mentioning in terms of this lack of U.S. leadership what I fear the most. I started by saying that we were at a conference where our allies directly, indirectly were asking for American leadership once again. But what I fear the most is the day that a group of bipartisan Senators goes to another conference like Munich or the Shangri-la Dialogue and we don't hear from our allies, we don't hear them asking for us to lead once again, because such silence will truly be dangerous indeed because that is when we will know that our traditional allies have given up on the United States; that is when we will know that our traditional allies have lost faith in America and have begun the process of making accommodations with our adversaries. We in the Senate must do all in our power to make sure that situation where we lose our allies, where they don't ask for our leadership, does not happen.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M.
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow morning.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:40 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, March 10, 2016, at 9:30 a.m.