

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 20, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I am deeply concerned that your administration's stepped up military presence in the Middle East, in conjunction with your dangerous and confusing rhetoric, may lead the United States into a protracted, costly, and unnecessary war with Iran. Such a war is not authorized, would unnecessarily risk the lives of Americans and our allies, cause enormous human suffering, and destabilize the economy.

Iran is undoubtedly an adversary that engages in dangerous behavior and had a largely unrestrained nuclear program prior to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). But you must not ignore the Constitution and subvert democracy by waging a war that does not have the support of the American people, is not authorized by their representatives, and risks American lives.

When you were sworn in as President, you inherited an Iran whose nuclear weapons ambitions were verifiably constrained for a decade or more by international agreement. A diverse coalition of countries worked together to block Iran's ability to build a nuclear weapon and install an intrusive inspection regime. Unfortunately, in part due to your ill-advised decision to abandon the JCPOA, Iran is now poised to breach certain limits in the deal by the end of the month. What is more, our closest allies in Europe -- frustrated by the unilateral, unjustified nature of the withdrawal from the JCPOA -- have sought to establish measures to work around U.S. sanctions. You have shattered the strong coalition aligned against Iran in 2015 that brought Iran to the negotiating table.

Against the backdrop of your Administration's historic missteps, your and your administration's problematic statements, and military escalation in the Gulf region, I am deeply concerned that the nation could be dragged into a war with Iran under your leadership. You have threatened "consequences the likes of which few throughout history have ever suffered before." Your national security advisor, John Bolton, known for being one of the advocates of the Iraq War, had reportedly ordered the Pentagon to develop an earlier plan for a 120,000 troop surge in the region. He has also threatened "unrelenting force" against Iran. These statements, combined with recent deployments, raise the specter of a miscalculation and disproportionate response to Iranian aggression that could lead to another unnecessary war.

The country has been here before. The U.S. began the Iraq War based on inaccurate information from John Bolton and others who claimed Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. They were mistaken then, at great cost to the nation. Eighteen years after going into Afghanistan, U.S. and allied troops are still there, despite your promise of withdrawal and long after completing their mission. And now your administration is reportedly considering using the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), passed in response to the attack on our homeland on 9/11, for a completely unrelated military action against Iran, which clearly would be outside the scope and intent of that law.

I demand that you not send U.S. armed forces into hostilities that are disproportionate and unnecessary to counter a direct attack or not authorized by Congress through a new AUMF.

I further urge that rather than embroil the U.S. in another war, you:

- a) Engage the international community in addressing the risks to navigation in the waterways close to Iran;
- b) Return the United States to the JCPOA if the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors continues to certify that Iran is in compliance with the agreement; and
- c) Require your administration officials to be clear that you are not advocating starting another war, which, this time, would be with an adversary that is better equipped than the Taliban, Saddam Hussein, or Bashar al-Assad's forces.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator