United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2026

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Wicker,

We write to request the United States Senate Committee on Armed Services ("the Committee") launch a bipartisan investigation, culminating in a report and public hearing, into the strike on Shajareh Tayyebeh Elementary School for girls in Minab, Iran that reportedly killed at least 168 people – mostly children – on the first day of U.S. operations against Iran on February 28, 2026.[1] Congress and the Committee have a constitutional responsibility to conduct robust oversight of the U.S. Department of Defense's operations in Iran to provide an appropriate check and balance on the Trump administration's use of the world's most powerful military, and this catastrophic airstrike urgently warrants congressional oversight and accountability.

The majority of those killed in the strike were girls between the ages of seven and 12 years old.[2] Neither the United States nor the Israeli Government has yet taken formal responsibility for this attack. On March 4, Secretary of Defense Hegseth acknowledged that the United States was "investigating" the strikes at the school, saying "All I know, all I can say, is that we're investigating that," but he shared no information about a timeline for review or a commitment to accountability.[3] *The New York Times* reports that preliminary findings from the ongoing military investigation have "determined that the United States is responsible for [the] deadly Tomahawk missile strike" on the school, according to officials and analysis of available evidence.[4] *The Washington Post* reports that the school was "on a U.S. target list and may have been mistaken for a military site."[5] Reporting further suggests that U.S. forces struck the school using outdated data provided by the Defense Intelligence Agency, despite historical satellite imagery showing

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[1] Da Silva, Chantal, et al. *What We Know about the Strike on a School in Iran as the Death Toll Rises*. NBC News, 5 Mar. 2026, www.nbcnews.com/world/iran/know-strike-school-iran-death-toll-rises-rcna261266?cid=sm_npd_nn_tw_ma&taid=69a81a182cbc2f000129d356&utm_campaign=trueanthem&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.

[2] McClure, Tess, and Deepa Parent. *Minab School Bombing: How the Worst Mass Casualty Event of the Iran War Unfolded – a Visual Guide*. The Guardian, 3 Mar. 2026, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2026/mar/03/minab-school-bombing-how-the-worst-mass-casualty-event-of-the-iran-war-unfolded-a-visual-guide.

[3] Brumfiel, Geoff, and Alyson Hunt. *Satellite Imagery Shows Strike That Destroyed Iranian School Was More Extensive than First Reported*. NPR, 4 Mar. 2026, www.npr.org/2026/03/04/nx-s1-5735801/satellite-imagery-shows-strike-that-destroyed-iranian-school-was-more-extensive-than-first-reported.

[4] Julian Barnes, et al. *U.S. at Fault in Strike on School in Iran, Preliminary Inquiry Says*. The New York Times, March 11, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/05/world/middleeast/iran-school-us-strikes-naval-base.html

[5] Tara Copp, et al. *Julian Barnes, et al. Iranian school was on U.S. target list, may have been mistaken as military site.* The Washington Post, March 11, 2026, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/03/11/us-strike-iran-elementary-school-ai-target-list/

that the building had been walled off from the military base and used as a school since at least 2016.[6]

Massive civilian casualty incidents like the attack in Minab are devastating to the Iranian civilian population and risk both undermining U.S. national security interests and rallying domestic support for the Iranian regime. Congress has not declared war nor authorized the use of military force against Iran, and the Trump administration has continually failed to provide a clear rationale for the war, the objectives it seeks to accomplish, or a strategy for achieving those objectives. Notwithstanding our assessment of this war's legality and constitutionality, the United States has a responsibility to engage in this operation in adherence to our laws and values.

Secretary Hegseth's own comments have not inspired confidence that the Department of Defense is taking the concern of civilian casualties seriously. On March 3, 2026, Secretary Hegseth stated that Operation Epic Fury would have "no stupid rules of engagement." The United States' global reputation is tied to our adherence to rules of engagement and laws of war. Failure to follow these rules and laws risks hardening our adversaries' resolve, especially considering Secretary Hegseth's call to show "no quarter, no mercy for our enemies." Additionally, our adversaries may submit our Servicemembers to reciprocal treatment, exposing them to the precise physical and psychological abuses the Geneva Conventions were signed to prevent. Therefore, it is crucial that Congress reassert its Article I power and ensure the Department of Defense's civilian leadership is complying with the law as it conducts operations against Iran.

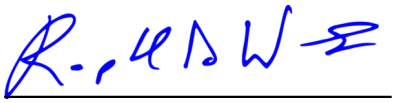
The February 28 Minab strike on a school full of young girls may be remembered as one of the most devastating and tragic errors in modern American military history. It demands congressional scrutiny. We respectfully request your inquiry to determine:

- Whether, as initial reporting suggests, U.S. forces were responsible for the strike on the school in Minab as part of preselected, day on strikes;
- If so, how this target was selected, including any role artificial intelligence played;
- How outdated intelligence was used;
- Who approved the targets;
- What systems or mechanisms the department used in Operation Epic Fury to prevent civilian harm incidents;
- Why the systems failed so completely on day one of this operation;
- What process the U.S. Department of Defense is using to investigate the incident;
- What the findings of any military investigation are;
- Any recommendations of the military investigation for accountability actions, and
- What processes are being deployed to ensure similar tragedies are not repeated in the future.

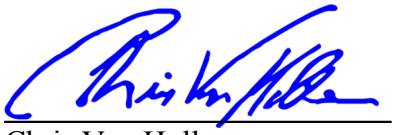
We respectfully request the Committee conduct a thorough investigation of this incident in a transparent manner for the preservation of our military's integrity and reputation.

Sincerely,

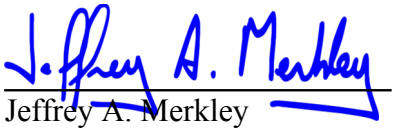
[6] *id.*



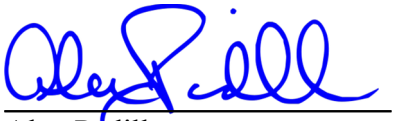
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

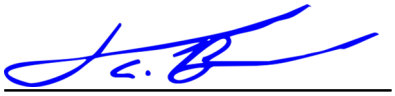


Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

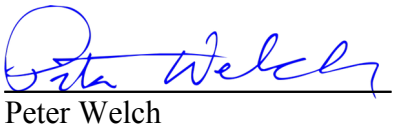


Alex Padilla
United States Senator

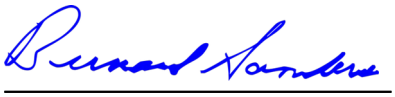
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



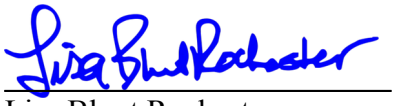
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator

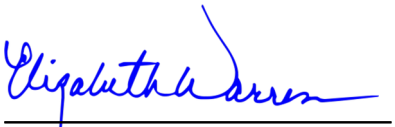


Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

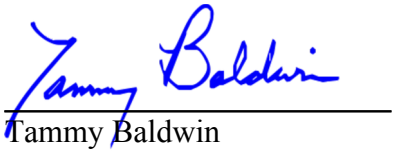


Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator

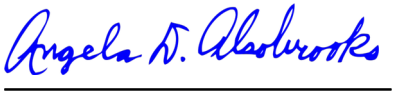
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



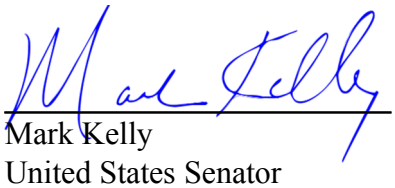
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator

Ruben Gallego
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

John Hickenlooper
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

John Ossoff
United States Senator