

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

We write to express serious concern regarding unauthorized and escalatory U.S. military strikes in Yemen and the reckless manner in which your senior national security officials planned these actions, discussing highly classified information on a platform Pentagon officials have since warned is vulnerable to Russian hacking groups.¹ While we share concerns about maritime security in the Red Sea, we call on your Administration to immediately cease unauthorized use of military force and instead seek specific statutory authorization from Congress before involving the U.S. in an unconstitutional conflict in the Middle East, which risks endangering U.S. military personnel in the region and escalating into a regime-change war.

The U.S. Constitution is clear: Congress holds the sole power to authorize offensive military action. The War Powers Resolution of 1973 (WPR) further reinforces this authority. Section 2(c) of the resolution stipulates that the President may introduce U.S. forces into hostilities only after a declaration of war or specific statutory authorization from Congress, or in a national emergency when the U.S. is under attack. Presently, no congressional authorization of military force exists for the recent hostilities carried out in Yemen, nor is there a “national emergency” pursuant to WPR Section 2(c).

We share the serious concerns over the threat that Yemen’s Houthi forces have posed to international shipping, which has primarily targeted vessels linked to Israel and grew to include U.S. and U.K. vessels. However, as members of your Administration have noted, only three percent of American trade is conducted through the Suez Canal and the vast majority of ships transiting through the Suez are foreign.² We note that in 2024, you criticized the prior Administration’s Yemen strategy, arguing that “it’s just a failed mentality” to “start dropping bombs” instead of solving problems through dialogue. “You don’t have to do that. You can talk in such a way where they respect you and they listen to you.”³

¹ Natasha Bertrand, Zachary Cohen, Betsy Klein and Shania Shelton, “Sources Say the Details Shared by Hegseth in Signal Chat were Classified as Atlantic Publishes Additional Messages,” *CNN*, March 25, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/26/politics/the-atlantic-publishes-signal-messages-yemen-strike/index.html>; Jose Olivares, “Pentagon Warned Staffers Against Using Signal Before White House Chat Leak,” *The Guardian*, March 25, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/25/signal-app-leaked-war-plans>.

² Jeffery Goldberg, “The Trump Administration Accidentally Texted Me Its War Plans,” *The Atlantic*, March 24, 2025, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/03/trump-administration-accidentally-texted-me-its-war-plans/682151/>. [“3 percent of US trade runs through the suez. 40 percent of European trade does. There is a real risk that the public doesn’t understand this or why it’s necessary.”]

³ Matthew Petti, “Trump Attacked Biden’s ‘Crazy’ Yemen War. Now He’s Reopening It.,” *Reason*, March 17, 2025, <https://reason.com/2025/03/17/trump-attacked-bidens-crazy-yemen-war-now-hes-reopening-it/>.

Senior Administration officials planning the airstrikes discussed this military campaign privately as one purely of choice, with Vice President Vance stating that “the strongest reason to do this is, as POTUS said, to send a message,” and arguing in favor of “delaying this a month, doing the messaging work on why this matters, seeing where the economy is.” Defense Secretary Hegseth acknowledged that “waiting a few weeks or a month does not fundamentally change the calculus” for an aerial assault, but “now is as good a time as any,” and that delaying the bombings could create the risk that “we don’t get to start this on our own terms.”⁴ Director of the National Counterterrorism Center nominee Joe Kent stated, “There is nothing time sensitive driving the time line. We’ll have the exact same options in a month” and CIA Director John Ratcliffe said, “[...] a delay would not negatively impact us and the additional time would be used to identify better starting points for coverage on Houthi leadership.”⁵ There was therefore ample time to consult with Congress and obtain the necessary authorization before initiating these attacks, and there is ample time to consult with Congress now, before engaging in further unauthorized strikes.

In light of current U.S. military strikes in Yemen apparently violating the Constitution and U.S. law, we ask that your Administration respond to the following questions by April 23, 2025, as we deliberate appropriate remedies and actions to best exercise Congress’s Article I authorities:

1. What legal justification does your Administration claim for these strikes, if any, given the lack of congressional authorization? Please provide any additional context for Vice President Vance’s reported justification for the strikes as “send[ing] a message” and Secretary Hegseth’s support for “start[ing] this on our own terms” regarding the claimed legality of this offensive use of force.
2. How does the Administration claim self-defense, deterrence, or response to an imminent attack as a justification for strikes, given the President’s remarks that attacks “will get progressively worse,” until the Houthis are “completely annihilated,” indicating plans to engage in a protracted conflict to degrade Houthi military capacity to deter possible attacks in the future?⁶
3. We are concerned about the national security breach created by the inclusion of journalist Jeffrey Goldberg to a Signal chain where the military campaign was discussed and planned over non-secure networks via messages set to auto-delete after 1 or 4 weeks.
 - a. What actions, if any, were taken to ensure messages sent over Signal on personal devices protected highly sensitive national-security information or were preserved in accordance with applicable records laws?
 - b. Have you tasked an independent entity to investigate this breach to determine if this was an intentional violation of record-keeping requirements and prohibitions on unauthorized transmission of classified information, and will there be disciplinary action against National Security Advisor Michael Waltz and those found responsible for the breach?

⁴ Jeffery Goldberg, “The Trump Administration Accidentally Texted Me Its War Plans,” *The Atlantic*, March 24, 2025, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/03/trump-administration-accidentally-texted-me-its-war-plans/682151/>.

⁵ Jeffrey Goldberg & Shane Harris, “Here are the Attack Plans That Trump’s Advisers Shared on Signal,” *The Atlantic*, March 26, 2025, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/03/signal-group-chat-attack-plans-hegseth-goldberg/682176>.

⁶ Ephrat Livni, “Trump Says Houthis in Yemen Will Be ‘Annihilated,’ as U.S. Keeps Up Strikes,” *The New York Times*, March 19, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/19/world/middleeast/trump-houthis-yemen-strikes.html>.

- c. What administrative accountability will be taken to ensure additional breaches do not occur?
4. In private text communications, Vice President Vance expressed reluctance over the planned hostilities, stating that “3 percent of US trade runs through the suez [sic]. 40 percent of European trade does.” Under which provisions of law or the Constitution does the Administration claim the power to launch unilateral airstrikes to maintain international commercial shipping routes, even in areas where the flow of U.S.-related trade is acknowledged to be marginal? Are there geographic or statutory limits to such claimed authorities?
5. Senior Administration officials privately argued to force Europeans to “remunerate” the United States for the assault and extracting from them “further economic gain” for restoring “freedom of navigation.” Did the Administration convey such expectations in advance of these bombings or otherwise coordinate with key U.S. partners and allies about this strategy and objectives? What did the Administration determine to be the financial costs of this military offensive? What additional budgetary resources and personnel are anticipated to accomplish the Administration’s military goals and objectives?
6. News reports indicate that U.S. airstrikes left the densely populated neighborhood in the Al-Jarraf district in ruins, with dozens killed and more than 100 injured. Additionally, a Signal message from National Security Advisor Michael Waltz stated, “The first target – their top missile guy – we had positive ID of him walking into his girlfriend’s building and it’s now collapsed.” What evidence is there for Lt. Gen. Alexis G. Grynkewich’s claim that there were “no indications of any civilian casualties” during recent U.S. bombings?⁷ What steps, if any, are being taken to mitigate further civilian casualties?⁸⁹

Regardless of any military options your Administration may intend to pursue, under the Constitution and U.S. law, the Executive Branch has an obligation to seek specific statutory authorization in any situation where U.S. armed forces are introduced into active or imminent hostilities, whether such introduction involves the offensive use of force by U.S. armed forces or where U.S. armed forces are likely to be targeted by an enemy’s use of force. Congress must have the opportunity to engage in a robust debate on the rationale for offensive force and vote on its merits before U.S. servicemembers are placed in harm’s way and additional taxpayer dollars are spent on yet another Middle East war. No president has the constitutional authority to bypass Congress on matters of war. As you know, the War Powers Resolution affords lawmakers expedited procedures to force a debate and vote to direct the removal of unauthorized U.S. hostilities at any time, which both chambers opted to do in 2019.¹⁰ This effort compelled your

⁷ Sean Parnell, “Chief Pentagon Spokesman Sean Parnell Holds Press Briefing,” (Press Briefing, Arlington, VA, March 17, 2025), U.S. Department of Defense, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/4123253/chief-pentagon-spokesman-sean-parnell-holds-press-briefing/>.

⁸ “U.S. Airstrikes on Houthi Targets Devastate Yemeni Neighborhood,” NBC News, March 20, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/video/u-s-airstrikes-on-houthi-targets-devastate-yemeni-neighborhood-234907205878>.

⁹ Jason Burke, “US Airstrikes on Yemen’s Houthis Kill at Least 31,” *The Guardian*, March 16, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/15/trump-yemen-airstrikes-houthis>.

¹⁰ Julian Borger, “Senate Votes to End US Military Support for Saudis in Yemen,” *The Guardian*, December 13, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/dec/13/senate-yemen-saudis-trump-resolution>.

Administration to suspend midair refueling for Saudi airstrikes over Yemen;¹¹ a statutory prohibition of midair refueling was then codified into law.¹²

We look forward to your prompt reply to our concerns as we explore appropriate legislative responses to the unauthorized use of offensive military force in Yemen and accountability measures for Administration officials involved in the leaking of classified information.

Sincerely,



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



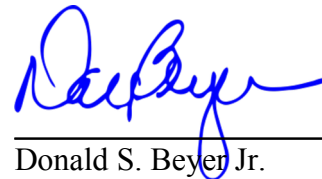
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



Becca Balint
Member of Congress



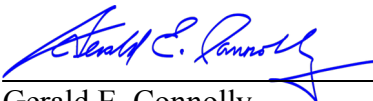
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



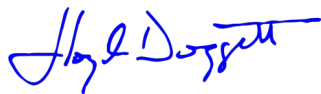
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

¹¹ Julian E. Barnes, and Edward Wong, “Trump Administration to Punish Saudis in Moves That Could Stop Tougher Acts by Congress,” *The New York Times*, November 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/09/us/politics/trump-saudi-sanctions-refueling.html>.

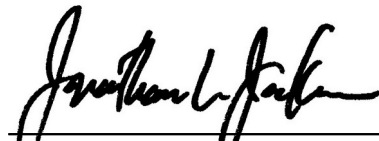
¹² “S.1790 - National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020,” United States Senate, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1790/text/enr>



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



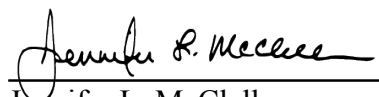
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



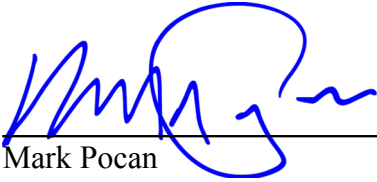
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress




Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



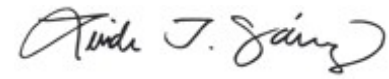
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



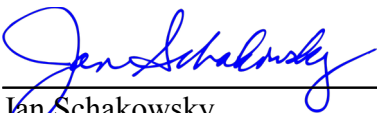
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



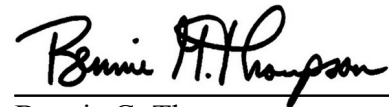
Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



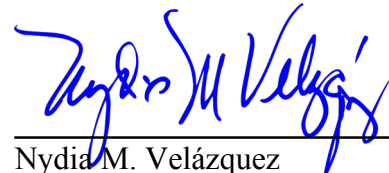
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
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Lateefah Simon

Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress