



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

MAR 14 2018

The Honorable Mitchell McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Majority Leader:

I am writing to express the views of the Department of Defense (DoD) on S.J. RES. 54. The Department opposes this proposed resolution. I appreciate Congress's continued support to DoD, and I welcome discussion of the situation in Yemen. DoD shares your concern about the harm to Yemeni civilians and infrastructure, and is working closely with the Department of State to support diplomatic negotiations to resolve the civil conflict and mitigate the humanitarian crisis.

Since 2015, the United States has provided limited support to Saudi-led coalition military operations to restore the UN-recognized government of Yemen and preserve Saudi territorial integrity from Houthi-aligned forces in Yemen. Neither President Obama nor President Trump authorized the use of U.S. military force against the Houthis. Our support takes the form of intelligence sharing, military advice, and logistical support, including air-to-air refueling. This non-combat support is focused on improving coalition processes and procedures, especially regarding compliance with the law of armed conflict and best practices for reducing the risk of civilian casualties. With this support, Saudi Arabia is able to defend itself from missile attacks, protect freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, and regain territory captured by the Iranian-backed Houthis after they seized territory from the Republic of Yemen Government.

New restrictions on this limited U.S. military support could increase civilian casualties, jeopardize cooperation with our partners on counterterrorism, and reduce our influence with the Saudis – all of which would further exacerbate the situation and humanitarian crisis. Withdrawing U.S. support would embolden Iran to increase its support to the Houthis, enabling further ballistic missile strikes on Saudi Arabia and threatening vital shipping lanes in the Red Sea, thereby raising the risk of a regional conflict. More broadly, this resolution would negatively affect our ability to foster long-term relationships, increase interoperability, promote burden sharing, and build strong security partnerships throughout the world.

I ask that Congress not impose restrictions on continued limited U.S. military support of coalition forces in engaging in operations in its legitimate exercise of self-defense. Thank you for your continued support of the Department of Defense.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "John M. Mattis", is located below the main body of the letter.

cc:

The Honorable Charles E. "Chuck" Schumer  
United States Senate Minority Leader  
The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
U.S. House of Representatives Minority Leader