

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 1, 2025

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write in regard to recent and ongoing U.S. military strikes against Ansar Allah, also known as the Houthis.

Since at least October 2023, the U.S. military has engaged in fending off Houthi attacks against Israel, commercial shipping and U.S. military assets. The Houthi attacks, backed by Iran, have threatened global commerce, endangered U.S. and allied forces, and threatened freedom of navigation in a critical international waterway. We strongly condemn these attacks and support efforts to protect U.S. and allied interests.

However, neither the U.S. strikes since October 2023 ordered by President Joe Biden, nor the previous years-long campaign against the Houthis conducted by Saudi Arabia were successful in establishing deterrence against the Houthis. Rather, these campaigns only served to embolden the Houthis and rally their recruiting base. The rare instances in which the Houthis have calmed their recent efforts to harass Red Sea shipping lanes were during sustained ceasefire periods in the Israel-Hamas war.

U.S. military action must have a clear strategy that advances our country's long-term national security objectives and is compliant with the law of armed conflict. Congress should be briefed about the recent strikes against the Houthis and the total cost expected to be incurred by this campaign at the American taxpayer's expense. The Administration must also explain to Congress and the American people its expected path forward given the failure of previous such efforts and statements from the Administration that the military campaign will continue and possibly expand to include military action against Iran.

We also recognize that any U.S. military response—especially sustained military engagement—must be conducted within the framework of the Constitution. Although the Constitution assigns the President the role of commander in chief of the U.S. military, it is Congress that is entrusted with the power to declare war—and Congress has not done so with respect to the Houthis.

Further, the War Powers Resolution of 1973 requires that the president consult with Congress before introducing U.S. Armed Forces into “hostilities” or “situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances” and to notify Congress within 48 hours of having done so. This law helps ensure that U.S. military action is subject to rigorous congressional oversight and deliberation.

As such, we request a classified briefing from your Administration within 10 days to address the following questions:

- **What was the basis for the strikes conducted against the Houthis? Was there intelligence on an imminent attack against commercial shipping?**
- **Does your administration consider U.S. armed forces to have been introduced into hostilities under the War Powers Resolution as a result of recent U.S. military action against the Houthis?**
- **Does your administration intend to seek congressional authorization for continued U.S. military action against the Houthis?**
- **What is your strategy to ensure U.S. strikes will now be effective and change the Houthis' behavior?**
- **What role, if any, will U.S. allies play in future strikes against the Houthis?**
- **Given your recent statements suggesting possible military action against Iran, does your administration intend to seek congressional authorization prior to such use of force?**
- **Has your administration ensured that U.S. strikes are consistent with the law of armed conflict?**
- **What are the estimated contingency costs associated with ongoing and potential future operations in the region, and how will they be accounted for in the defense budget?**

Ensuring the security of U.S. forces, allies, and global commerce is a priority we all share. We also believe it is critical that the United States avoids stumbling into another costly and unnecessary war.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to a prompt response.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Rand Paul, M.D.
United States Senator