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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4702

ARMED SERVICES

May 23, 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Patrick Shanahan
Secretary of Defense (Acting)
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Shanahan:

I was in Congress during the debate over war with Iraq. I remember well supporters' selective release of individual pieces of intelligence, allegations of terrorist connections, hostility towards diplomacy and predictions that a war would be quick, easy and cheap. In recent weeks, I have seen ominous reminders of this script in the words and actions of those who support military conflict with Iran.

I am alarmed by increasing tensions between the United States and Iran. With tensions running high, an accident or minor incident could lead to a wider conflict, even if neither party desires this outcome.

As such, it is necessary that Congress exercise its Article I authority to conduct rigorous oversight of the executive branch's actions and case for hostilities. Therefore, I have the following questions regarding the present status of U.S. policy regarding Iran that I think my constituents would want answers to:

1. Changes in Iranian military posture could be interpreted in different ways. What evidence exists that Iran is preparing for a first strike against U.S. regional assets?
2. The administration has made a public show of deploying assets to the Middle East. Do these capabilities provide Congress and the public with a sense of the scale of possible responses to Iranian actions? Were these deployments previously planned?
3. A major motivation behind the longstanding goal of energy independence is reducing U.S. dependence on energy resources from volatile regions. Do attacks on non-U.S. petroleum assets like tankers and pipelines constitute an attack on U.S. interests, given that the U.S. may soon be a net energy exporter?
4. If the recent designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a Foreign Terrorist Organization is an attempt to claim authorization to use force under existing law, this tactic would be a transparent ploy to circumvent Congress. Does the administration believe it has the authority to strike Iran under existing AUMFs?
5. What diplomatic and military-military communications channels exist between the United States and Iran to reduce the risk of miscalculation?

6. What is the administration's diplomatic strategy to increase transparency into and reduce the threat from Iran's nuclear program? What efforts were made to build consensus for this strategy with the P5+1 and the European Union prior to the administration's unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA?

Across the Middle East, Iran's military actions and support for proxy forces contribute to regional violence and instability. Instead of issuing vague threats and releasing intelligence without context, the administration must work with Congress to reassure allies, reduce regional tensions and counter Iranian influence in the region.

Sincerely,



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress
Washington State, 2nd District