

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Message to the Senate Returning Without Approval Legislation Regarding the Removal of United States Armed Forces From Hostilities in Yemen

April 16, 2019

To The Senate of the United States:

I am returning herewith without my approval S.J. Res. 7, a joint resolution that purports to direct the President to remove United States Armed Forces from hostilities in or affecting the Republic of Yemen, with certain exceptions. This resolution is an unnecessary, dangerous attempt to weaken my constitutional authorities, endangering the lives of American citizens and brave service members, both today and in the future.

This joint resolution is unnecessary because, apart from counterterrorism operations against al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIS, the United States is not engaged in hostilities in or affecting Yemen. For example, there are no United States military personnel in Yemen commanding, participating in, or accompanying military forces of the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthis in hostilities in or affecting Yemen.

Since 2015, the United States has provided limited support to member countries of the Saudi-led coalition, including intelligence sharing, logistics support, and, until recently, in-flight refueling of non-United States aircraft. All of this support is consistent with applicable Arms Export Control Act authorities, statutory authorities that permit the Department of Defense to provide logistics support to foreign countries, and the President's constitutional power as Commander in Chief. None of this support has introduced United States military personnel into hostilities.

We are providing this support for many reasons. First and foremost, it is our duty to protect the safety of the more than 80,000 Americans who reside in certain coalition countries that have been subject to Houthi attacks from Yemen. Houthis, supported by Iran, have used missiles, armed drones, and explosive boats to attack civilian and military targets in those coalition countries, including areas frequented by American citizens, such as the airport in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In addition, the conflict in Yemen represents a "cheap" and inexpensive way for Iran to cause trouble for the United States and for our ally, Saudi Arabia.

S.J. Res. 7 is also dangerous. The Congress should not seek to prohibit certain tactical operations, such as in-flight refueling, or require military engagements to adhere to arbitrary timelines. Doing so would interfere with the President's constitutional authority as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, and could endanger our service members by impairing their ability to efficiently and effectively conduct military engagements and to withdraw in an orderly manner at the appropriate time.

The joint resolution would also harm the foreign policy of the United States. Its efforts to curtail certain forms of military support would harm our bilateral relationships, negatively affect our ongoing efforts to prevent civilian casualties and prevent the spread of terrorist organizations such as al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIS, and embolden Iran's malign activities in Yemen.

We cannot end the conflict in Yemen through political documents like S.J. Res. 7. Peace in Yemen requires a negotiated settlement. Unfortunately, inaction by the Senate has left vacant key diplomatic positions, impeding our ability to engage regional partners in support of

the United Nations–led peace process. To help end the conflict, promote humanitarian and commercial access, prevent civilian casualties, enhance efforts to recover American hostages in Yemen, and defeat terrorists that seek to harm the United States, the Senate must act to confirm my nominees for many critical foreign policy positions.

I agree with the Congress about the need to address our engagements in foreign wars. As I said in my State of the Union address in February, great nations do not fight endless wars. My Administration is currently accelerating negotiations to end our military engagement in Afghanistan and drawing down troops in Syria, where we recently succeeded in eliminating 100 percent of the ISIS caliphate. Congressional engagement in those endeavors would be far more productive than expending time and effort trying to enact this unnecessary and dangerous resolution that interferes with our foreign policy with respect to Yemen.

For these reasons, it is my duty to return S.J. Res. 7 to the Senate without my approval.

DONALD J. TRUMP

The White House,
April 16, 2019.

NOTE: The message referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : Yemen, legislation regarding removal of U.S. Armed Forces from hostilities, veto message.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces, withdrawal ; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Deployment; Iran : Yemen, role; Legislation, proposed : Yemen, legislation regarding removal of U.S. Armed Forces from hostilities; Presidency, U.S. : Constitutional role and powers; Saudi Arabia : Security cooperation with U.S.; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist organization; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Global threat; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Yemen : Civil war and sectarian violence.

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