

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 7, 2019

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

Dear Mr. President,

Despite the recent death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) presents an ongoing national security threat to the United States, our allies, and our interests. It is imperative that we remain closely engaged with our allies and partners in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS and the violent ideology that has inspired affiliated groups and attacks throughout the world.

As of August, the Department of Defense (DOD) estimated that ISIS retained between 14,000 and 18,000 “members” in Iraq and Syria, including up to 3,000 foreign fighters. Furthermore, according to DOD, the SDF continues to hold about 10,000 ISIS fighters in detention centers across northern Syria. Of those, approximately 2,000 are foreign fighters from more than 50 different countries.

Unfortunately, Turkey’s recent incursion into northern Syria significantly undermined our collective efforts to defeat ISIS, put our SDF partners and civilians under their control at great risk, and resulted in the escape of an unidentified number of ISIS. It has also unleashed a humanitarian crisis in northern Syria, including the displacement of several hundred thousand non-combatants, and horrific killings of unarmed civilians, including incidents that Secretary of Defense Esper has described as potential war crimes.

By failing to live up to our commitments to partners and abdicating U.S. leadership in Syria, the United States has effectively given ISIS time and space to reconstitute. There are already reports that since Turkey’s incursion, hundreds of ISIS detainees have broken out of prison and fled to unknown locations. Furthermore, following the United States’ betrayal, the Syrian Democratic Forces have sought cooperation with the murderous Assad regime, which has a history of turning a blind eye to ISIS and other violent extremist groups.

We are also significantly troubled by your endorsement of the Putin-Erdogan deal for re-establishing control of northern Syria, which we believe runs counter to U.S. strategic interests and it is likely to result in additional violence against the SDF and Syrian Kurds.

Given the dynamics in northern Syria following your reckless decision to withdraw troops and permit Turkey’s invasion, and the continued threat posed by ISIS, we ask that you submit to Congress a comprehensive plan for Syria not later than December 6, 2019. This plan should, at a minimum, provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is the Administration's current estimate of the number of ISIS members in Iraq and Syria, including those currently detained by the SDF, Turkish forces, or other forces?
2. How have the deaths of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and other senior ISIS leaders impacted ISIS?
3. How many ISIS detainees have escaped, does the administration know the location of these individuals, and how do you plan to address the threat posed by these escaped ISIS fighters?
4. How do you plan to stabilize areas formerly controlled by ISIS, including efforts to support, develop, and expand local governance structures?
5. What training and support programs, by U.S. agency or department, are specifically focused on countering ISIS?
6. How will you address the detention of ISIS fighters? Will you designate an existing official within the State Department to serve as a senior-level coordinator for all efforts related to such detainees?
7. How will the United States Government ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Syria?
8. How many Syrian nationals have worked with the United States Government? What is the impact of the U.S. withdrawal on these individuals and how will you ensure their safety?
9. What diplomatic efforts are in place to achieve a negotiated political settlement to the Syrian civil war in agreement with United Nations' resolutions?
10. What resources are necessary to achieve your plan, including the specific number of U.S. military and civilian personnel that should be deployed to Syria and the region?

Thank you for your prompt attention to these matters.

Sincerely,



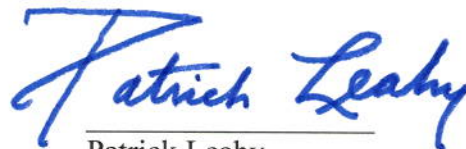
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United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



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United States Senator

Jack Reed

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