

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 11, 2016

The Honorable Ashton B. Carter
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr.
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
9999 Joint Staff Pentagon, Room 2D920
Washington, DC 20319

Dear Secretary Carter and General Dunford:

Thank you for your testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday, September 22, 2016. We appreciate your willingness to share your views on the significant challenges our nation faces around the globe, and we are writing to follow up on the discussion regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran. As you know, earlier this year, the administration provided \$1.7 billion in cash to Iran. As was raised in the hearing, there are reports that Iran has funneled this money into its military budget.

The plain purpose of transferring the payment in cash to Tehran was to circumvent the effects of U.S. and international financial sanctions. Iran is almost certainly using this windfall to skirt the arms embargo and illicitly purchase weapons for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the terrorist organization Hezbollah, and/or the murderous Assad regime in Syria. We are deeply concerned that this large infusion of U.S. taxpayer-funded cash into the coffers of the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism is going to further embolden Iran and result in our troops and our allies confronting more lethal and better equipped adversaries and potential adversaries.

General Dunford, in your testimony you referred to this possibility as “troubling.” You also testified that Iran will be “more effective” in spreading malign influence with the additional funds and said that, “...I would prefer that we not provide additional resources to Iran.” In addition, you referred to the decision as “political,” and noted that regarding the payment being a ransom, you have “only read open source reporting on that.” When discussing the nature and potential consequences of the payment, Secretary Carter, you informed us that the Pentagon had not been consulted in the decision-making process, testifying that, “I don’t know all the details of it, and the Chairman and I were not involved in that. It is a decision that was taken by the law enforcement and the diplomatic community, and I would have to refer you there.”

While we understand that other agencies and departments would be in the lead for such a transaction, we are deeply concerned that President Obama and the rest of the administration did

not think it was necessary to even notify the Secretary of Defense or the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the United States was about to provide the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism with \$1.7 billion in cash. It seems clear that the Obama administration's injection of substantial, liquid financial resources into Iran's military budget also has significant and obvious implications for America's national security interests and required military posture in the Middle East.

These additional funds for Iran's military budget are troubling especially in light of the increasingly belligerent behavior of Tehran since the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action went into effect. In addition to supporting Hezbollah and Assad, since last January, Iran has illegally detained ten American sailors, repeatedly tested ballistic missiles, incessantly harassed U.S. naval vessels, and unjustly imprisoned American citizens.

In light of these facts, we respectfully ask that you submit written answers to the questions below:

1. Is it the Department of Defense's assessment that the \$1.7 billion in cash the administration provided to Iran has been primarily devoted to Iran's military budget?
2. How does the Department of Defense assess that Iran will spend these additional military resources?
3. What are the tactical, operational, or strategic implications for the United States of these additional resources, and how does the Department of Defense plan to respond?
4. Have any of the United States' Middle East regional partners expressed concern to you regarding Iran's increasing belligerence, as well as Tehran's growing military investment?
5. Do you see a correlation between the increased financial resources now available to Iran and the increase in its belligerent activities?
6. When decisions of this nature are made in the future, do you think it would be helpful for other entities of the executive branch, including the White House and National Security Council, to consult the Defense Department beforehand?

Thank you both for your distinguished service to our country. We appreciate your assistance regarding this important matter, and we would appreciate a response by October 29.

Sincerely,



Ted Cruz
United States Senator



Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator



Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator



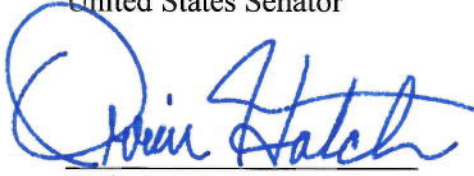
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United States Senator



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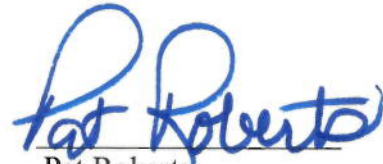
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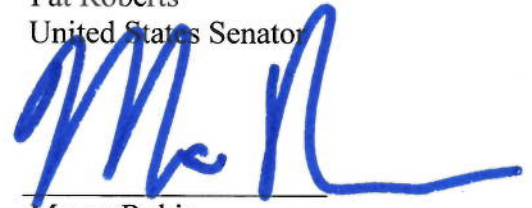
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M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



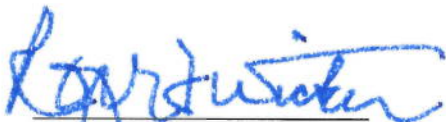
Marco Rubio
United States Senator



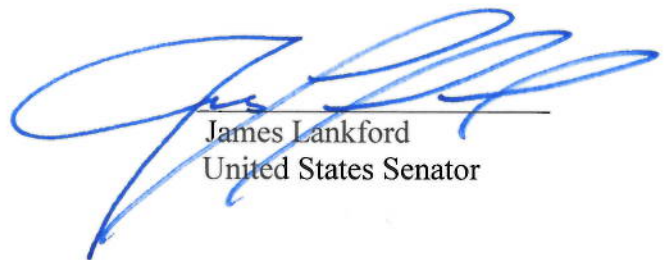
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United States Senator



David Vitter
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator