

Prevent War With Iran

The Risk of War with Iran Remains Severe

- Many have criticized President Trump's recent killing of General Qasem Soleimani, the head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, as a [risky](#)¹ and [disproportionate](#)² move that would result in [dangerous escalation](#).³
- While some U.S. and European government officials say Iran's recent missile attacks on two U.S. bases in Iraq was [strategically done](#)⁴ in order to minimize casualties, former acting CIA Director Michael Morell believes Iran is likely to carry out additional [long-term retaliation](#).⁵ The erratic Trump administration could easily make a blunder that triggers a series of tit-for-tat military responses that spiral into full blown war. Only de-escalation and robust diplomacy can prevent that.
- Despite President Trump's recent decision to respond to Iran's missile attack with more sanctions instead of a U.S. strike, his initial instinct and vows to retaliate with a bombing of 52 Iranian sites, including many of cultural importance, demonstrates why Congress needs to intervene. Such an impulsive overreaction — which has been [rejected by the Pentagon](#)⁶ — would not only constitute a war crime according to international law, but would also endanger civilians and likely galvanize Iranians against the U.S.
- Sending [additional troops](#)⁷ to the Middle East further escalates the situation and can lead to accidental spark of war. U.S. troops in the Middle East make U.S. casualties — and therefore a war with Iran — more likely.

Congress Must Assert Its Authority Over the Use of Military Force

- The Constitution grants Congress sole authority over the decision to go to war. As Congress has not authorized the use of force against Iran, any use of preemptive or preventive force against Iran would be illegal and unconstitutional.
- Twice now, last June and this January, the U.S. has come to the brink of war with Iran. Congress can not allow a third crisis and potential miscalculation to spark all out war.
- Multiple Members of Congress recently briefed on Gen. Soleimani's killing have [called into question](#)⁸ the administration's [assertion of an imminent threat](#)⁹ as legal justification, saying evidence was "[grossly unspecific](#)"¹⁰ and unconvincing, seeing "[echoes of Iraq](#)."¹¹
- The administration's other assertion that the 2002 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) allowed Gen. Soleimani's killing is quite dubious. Sen. Rand Paul [explained](#)¹²: "I see no way in the world you could logically argue that an authorization to have war with Saddam Hussein has anything to [do] with having war with people currently in Iraq."

1 Tootsi, Nahal, Daniel Lippman, and Wesley Morgan, *Trump takes massive gamble with killing of Iranian commander*, Politico, January 2, 2020

2 Clark, Wesley K., *Killing a top Iranian military leader was a whack-for-tat move*, The Washington Post, January 3, 2020

3 Filkins, Dexter, *The Dangers Posed by the Killing of Qassem Suleimani*, The New Yorker, January 3, 2020

4 Hosenball, Mark and Matt Spetalnick, *Iran believed to have deliberately missed U.S. forces in Iraq strikes: sources*, Reuters, January 8, 2020

5 Dorfman, Zach, *Iran's Revenge Plans Are Bigger Than Missile Strikes*, Foreign Policy, January 8, 2020

6 Baker, Peter and Maggie Haberman, *Pentagon Rules Out Striking Iranian Cultural Sites, Contradicting Trump*, The New York Times, January 6, 2020

7 *Soleimani killing: US deploying 3,000 more troops to Middle East*, AlJazeera, January 3, 2020

8 Murphy, Chris, Twitter, January 8, 2020

9 Ward, Alex, *"Probably the worst briefing I've seen": Inside the disastrous congressional Iran meeting*, Vox, January 8, 2020

10 Duehren, Andrew, *Pelosi Sets House Vote on War-Powers Bill for Thursday*, The Wall Street Journal, January 8, 2020

11 Udall, Tom, *Following Congressional Briefing on Iran, Udall Urges Senate to Halt the March to War*, Press Release, January 8, 2020

12 Carney, Jordain, *Rand Paul, Mike Lee rip administration over 'insulting and demeaning' Iran briefing*, The Hill, January 8, 2020

War with Iran Would Be a Disaster

- Iran's [military doctrine](#)¹³ is designed specifically to counter enemies with greater technological superiority.
- [Ilan Goldberg, Director of the Middle East Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, explains](#)¹⁴: "The Islamic Republic can use proxy forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen to attack the United States and its partners. It has an arsenal of ballistic missiles that can target U.S. bases in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Its mines and land-based antiship missiles can wreak havoc in the Strait of Hormuz and drive up global oil prices. Iran has the capacity to shut down a significant portion of Saudi oil production with aggressive sabotage or cyberattacks, and with its paramilitary unit known as the Quds Force, Iran can attack U.S. targets around the globe."
- Going to war with Iran could fuel anti-American sentiment and violent extremism in Iran and the region for generations to come and spiral into a [wider regional war](#)¹⁵ with unimaginable consequences.

Only Diplomacy Can Avert War

- The Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign has failed to bring Iran into negotiations for a new nuclear deal, instead pushing them into a more [substantial withdrawal](#)¹⁶ from the Iran Nuclear Agreement.
- Instead of rejecting diplomacy and urging other signatories of the nuclear deal to do the same, the U.S. should find a way to return to the negotiation table. The U.S. should embrace European calls for restraint and employ allied [lines of communication](#)¹⁷ to open diplomatic channels with Iran. Only good-faith diplomatic measures can reduce dangerously high tensions between the U.S. and Iran.
- Diplomatic channels established during negotiations can be crucial for peacefully de-escalating potentially tense situations, as evidenced by the [swift release of U.S. soldiers](#)¹⁸ captured at sea in January 2016.

Steps Members of Congress Can Take

- **In the Senate, co-sponsor [S.Con.Res.33](#) introduced by Sen. Tom Udall (D-NM), as the next step to [H.Con.Res.83](#) introduced by Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), to terminate the use of United States Armed Forces to engage in hostilities in or against Iran.**
- **Co-sponsor [S.J.Res.69](#) introduced by Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) to direct the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities against the Islamic Republic of Iran that have not been authorized by Congress.**
- **Cosponsor [S.J.Res.13](#) introduced by Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) or [H.R.2456](#) introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) to repeal the 2002 AUMF against Iraq.**
- **Co-sponsor the No War Against Iran Act, [S.3159](#) introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) or [H.R.5543](#) introduced by Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) to prohibit the use of funds for unauthorized military force against Iran, and for other purposes.**
- **Spotlight the administration's lack of authorization to go to war with Iran and make statements opposing war.**

¹³ Connell, Michael, *Iran's Military Doctrine*, The Iran Primer, October 11, 2010

¹⁴ Goldenberg, Ilan, *What a War With Iran Would Look Like*, Foreign Affairs, June 4, 2019

¹⁵ Rafati, Nayson, *Regional Risks of Rising U.S.-Iran Rivalry*, International Crisis Group Commentary, November 1, 2018

¹⁶ Marcus, Jonathan, *Is the Iran nuclear deal dead and buried?*, BBC News, January 6, 2020

¹⁷ Wintour, Patrick, *Diplomacy over Iran is still possible – if only to avoid an all-out war*, The Guardian, January 5, 2020

¹⁸ Sharafedin, Bozorgmehr and Phil Stewart, *Iran frees U.S. sailors swiftly as diplomacy smoothes waters*, Reuters, January 12, 2016