

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 2, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable John Ratcliffe
Director of Central Intelligence
McLean, VA 22101

General Dan Caine
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
9999 Joint Staff Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20318

Dear Secretary Hegseth, Secretary Rubio, Director Ratcliffe, and General Caine:

The decision to initiate or expand armed conflict is among the gravest responsibilities entrusted to our government. When U.S. forces are placed in harm's way, Congress and the American people are owed clear objectives, legal justification, and a defined strategy. Unfortunately, to date, you have failed to articulate this information.

A number of our brave service members have already lost their lives in this conflict, and the American people are entitled to clear answers including why this conflict began, what objectives justify continued military engagement, and what guardrails are in place to prevent a broader or protracted regional war.

Tomorrow, your classified briefing to Members of Congress regarding ongoing military operations must address strategy, intelligence, legal justification, and long-term consequences in concrete terms. Congress has a constitutional responsibility in matters of war and that requires complete and candid information.

Accordingly, during the briefing tomorrow, we ask that you directly address the following:

1. **Imminent Threat Justification.** What is the Administration's legal justification for initiating hostilities? What specific, imminent threat to U.S. personnel, territory, or vital national interests formed the basis for initiating this war?
2. **Strategic Objectives and Victory.** What are the defined U.S. objectives in this conflict, what conditions would constitute mission success, and under what circumstances would operations cease? Will this require American ground troops fighting in Iran?
3. **Regime Change.** With the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, who is in control of the country today and who does the Administration expect to control key state institutions at

the end of this conflict?

4. **Nuclear Security.** Who currently controls Iran's nuclear facilities and materials, and what safeguards are in place to prevent diversion or proliferation, or complete loss of control?
5. **Strait of Hormuz and Maritime Security.** What is the long term risk to access to, and through the strait for commercial traffic? If oil flows do not resume shortly, it will have impact on Americans' electric bills and gas bills in addition to global energy markets.
6. **Costs and Impacts on Munitions Inventories.** What are the costs associated with this operation? What are current U.S. munitions inventories in the region and globally? What is the impact of continued operations on overall U.S. contingency requirements?

We look forward to hearing your direct and comprehensive responses tomorrow.

Sincerely,



GREGORY W. MEEKS
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee



ADAM SMITH
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee



JIM HIMES
Ranking Member
House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence



ROSA DELAURO
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee



BETTY MCCOLLUM

Ranking Member

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense