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**Congress of the United States**  
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TRADE

May 2, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C., 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I write concerning your remarks before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 10, 2019 – specifically, your exchange with Senator Rand Paul regarding military action in Iran.

Senator Paul asked, “Do you believe that the 2001 authorization to go to war with those who attacked us on 9/11 applies to Iran, or Iran’s Revolutionary Guard?”<sup>1</sup> As part of your answer, you stated, “I’d prefer to just leave that to lawyers, Senator,” and “there is no doubt there is a connection between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Al Qaeda.”<sup>2</sup>

I am troubled by your refusal to state unequivocally that the Administration will not use military force against Iran without first seeking authorization from Congress, and by your reference to “a connection” between Iran and Al Qaeda. This claim, in the context of Senator Paul’s question, suggests that the Trump Administration might deem military action against Iran permissible under the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (P.L. 107-40).

I am also concerned about the lack of evidence to support this claim. As the *New York Times* reported on April 10<sup>th</sup>, “Al Qaeda and its affiliates are Sunni extremists who consider adherents of the Shiite branch of Islam, like Iran’s government, to be heretics.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, a 2018 analysis of declassified documents obtained during the 2011 raid on Osama bin Laden’s compound found that “[Al Qaeda] views Iran as a hostile entity.”<sup>4</sup> The study additionally notes,

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<sup>1</sup> “Review of the FY 2020 State Department Budget Request.” Full Committee Hearing, United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. April 10, 2019. Available at: <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/review-of-the-fy-2020-state-department-budget-request-041019>.

<sup>2</sup> See 1.

<sup>3</sup> Edmondson, Catie and Wong, Edward. “Pompeo Is Warned Against Sidestepping Congress for Conflict With Iran.” *New York Times*. April 10, 2019. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/10/world/middleeast/pompeo-congress-iran.html>

<sup>4</sup> Lahoud, Nelly. “Al-Qa’ida’s Contested Relationship with Iran: The View from Abbottabad.” New America Foundation. August 20, 2018. Available at: [https://s3.amazonaws.com/newamericadotorg/documents/Al-Qaidas-Contested-Relationship-with-Iran-2018-08-20\\_151707.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/newamericadotorg/documents/Al-Qaidas-Contested-Relationship-with-Iran-2018-08-20_151707.pdf)

“examined documents provide no evidence of cooperation between [Al Qaeda] and Iran on planning or carrying out terrorist attacks.”<sup>5</sup>

If the Administration is aware of information that contradicts this existing evidence, I respectfully request that you transmit this information to Congress without delay. As you are a former member of Congress, I know you understand the importance of our operating with a clear and comprehensive understanding of the issues before us, and trust that you will relay any previously undisclosed intelligence as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Andy Levin  
Member of Congress

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<sup>5</sup> See 4.