

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: Ending our endless wars

[VOIDING THE BLANK CHECK FOR FOREVER WAR](#)

Rep. Barbara Lee has been on a one woman mission to repeal the blank check Congress gave the president after the 9/11 attacks to wage endless war around the world.

She came one step closer this week after the House Appropriations Committee [approved](#) an amendment that would repeal the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) and give Congress eight months to debate and decide whether or not to authorize more war. The amendment was modeled after Lee's stand-alone legislation, [H.R. 1274](#).

According to the Cost of War Project at Brown University, the United States is "[actively engaged](#) in countering terrorism in 80 nations on six continents" with the current tab of all post-9/11 wars [now hovering around \\$6 trillion](#).

"More than 75 percent of members currently serving in Congress were not serving when the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force passed," Lee noted at a [news conference](#) on Capitol Hill this week. "We owe it to the American people to take these tough votes and repeal the 2001 authorization."

"It doesn't matter whether your favorite founding father was Hamilton or Madison or Jefferson or Washington," said Rep. Thomas Massie, the lead Republican co-sponsor of H.R. 1274. "They all recognized the wisdom of leaving the power to declare war in the legislative branch, and the danger of letting the executive branch have that power."

A similar measure passed the committee by voice vote in 2017. But then-House Speaker Paul Ryan stripped it from the larger spending bill. Lee does not expect a similar move from Speaker Pelosi this year, all but ensuring it will pass the House when the bill is considered on the House floor, likely the second week of June.

See our statement on the House Appropriations subcommittee vote [here](#).

TOPLINE MESSAGING

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- We are sending servicemembers to fight and die in wars that most current members of Congress have never voted on.
- Going to war is supposed to be hard.
- The 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force has become an Executive Branch tool for waging global, endless war without the consent of Congress.
- No AUMF is needed to defend the United States against imminent attacks.
- Debate on the existing AUMFs must center around whether the use of military force is the right tool to address the security challenge posed by violent groups that perpetrate terrorism.

(See our full AUMF messaging document [here](#).)

THE URGENCY OF REPEAL: IRAN

The Trump administration, led by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, has engaged in a years-long effort to ([falsely](#)) link Iran to al-Qaeda in order to, it appears, argue that an attack on Iran would fall under the legal purview of the 2001 AUMF. Indeed, during a recent Senate hearing, Pompeo hyped the connection and [refused to rule out](#) whether the 2001 AUMF would apply to Iran.

These efforts are especially troubling given that Team Trump has been escalating its bellicose rhetoric, moving more military assets to the region, and provoking Iran for a fight.

Seemingly worried about this line of argument, U.S. officials are going to the press saying the Iran/al-Qaeda link is bogus, in the same manner that we've been seeing U.S. officials recently [challenging](#) the Trump administration's interpretation of the intelligence on this alleged increased threat from Iran. Here's an excerpt from a Time Magazine [piece this week](#):

“[Pompeo] has blown the level of collusion between Iran and a few of the remnants of al Qaeda **way out of proportion**,” says a senior U.S. official who follows developments in Iran closely. “There have been occasional marriages of convenience, but there is nothing in the intelligence to suggest that any of them has been consummated in any grand anti-American alliance.”

Members of Congress are linking 2001 AUMF repeal efforts to the Trump administration's [push for war in Iran](#).

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“I think we can get this bill passed, the time is now,” Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger said at the Capitol Hill press conference this week, “especially as the administration escalates tensions with Iran.”

Rep. Massie [agreed](#). “The president says that he doesn’t want war with Iran, and I believe him. The easiest way not to have war with Iran is not to start a war with Iran. He is not authorized, nor is any president authorized, to commit an act of war against any other country without a declaration from Congress. That power rests here in Congress and in Congress alone.”

CONGRESS REASSERTING ITS ROLE

For nearly two-decades, the legislative branch has acquiesced to three separate administrations expanding the post-9/11 wars with no end in sight.

And while that’s beginning to change in terms of the 2001 AUMF specifically, Congress has actually reasserted its war making authority [already this year](#), passing, in a bipartisan fashion, a historic War Powers Resolution declaring that U.S. military involvement in the Saudi-led coalition’s war against Houthi rebels in Yemen is unauthorized.

Members of Congress are moving on Iran too, as both the [House](#) and the [Senate](#) have introduced legislation to bar funding for an unauthorized war with Iran. More than 60 national organizations — including J Street, the National Iranian American Council, Win Without War and Indivisible — [recently signed a letter](#) urging support for those measures.

While these efforts have yet to cross the finish line, the message is clear: the days of the executive branch’s unchecked power to wage war are over, and Congress is taking back its Constitutional power to decide when and where the United States goes to war.

BURIED LEDES

Nearly two dozen progressive groups [sent a letter](#) to all the 2020 Democratic presidential candidates urging them to support **cutting \$200 billion from the Pentagon’s bloated and wasteful budget**.

The Trump administration will [reportedly](#) use the hyped Iran threat as justification for **bypassing Congress on arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates**.

The Saudi government will reportedly execute three moderate Sunni scholars in the coming weeks [on trumped up terrorism charges](#). The United Nations, the U.S. State Department, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch all condemned their detention.

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Is it [time](#) to **start questioning U.S. aid to Israel?**

What can we do to stop the Trump-Bolton war with Iran? **See what Senator Chris Murphy and our own Erica Fein [have to say](#).**

And finally, it looks like “Space Force” [is dead](#), leaving a lurking [question](#): **what are we going to do about all those space pirates?**