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Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: Two House Votes to Block Trump's Path to War

Two Steps Closer to Ending Endless War

Earlier this month, the Trump administration brought the U.S. and Iran to the brink of war. Yesterday, Congress took two more critical steps to pulling us back — not only from that war, but from endless war altogether.

After a long-fought battle, the House of Representatives passed two key pieces of legislation:

- [H.R.2456](#) — Rep. Barbara Lee's bill to repeal the 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) Against Iraq ([236 Yeas, 166 Nays](#))
- [H.R.5543](#) — Rep. Ro Khanna's bill to block the use of funds for an unauthorized war with Iran, and clarify that no congressional authorization currently exists ([228 Yeas, 175 Nays](#))

These bills are not just a rebuke of Trump's aggressive march to war. They are a long overdue step toward Congress reasserting its sole constitutional power to determine when, whether, and where the United States goes to war. But already, the Trump administration has vowed to veto both, releasing [statements](#) that sow misinformation and false perceptions about the intents and effects of these two bills.

Let's separate fact from fiction.

Repealing the 2002 AUMF

In 2002, Congress passed an AUMF to authorize the invasion of Iraq to topple the Saddam Hussein regime. Following the end of that war in December 2011, successive presidential administrations stretched this narrowly tailored AUMF beyond recognition, unbelievably using it as part of its legal justification for a new war in both [Syria and Iraq](#). Even before Trump, this overstretched interpretation was a recipe for an indefinite military presence in Iraq — potentially against the will of the Iraqi people — without any debate by the U.S. public or any approval by Congress.

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Trump has taken this dubious legal interpretation to the next level, claiming the 2002 AUMF as a legal basis for the assassination of Iranian Major General Qasem Soleimani. If Trump's justification is allowed to survive, it will expand multiple administrations' already worrisome interpretation that the AUMF covers the use of military force against any threat to or from Iraq to cover any nation-state it deems a threat emanating from or to Iraq. In reality, launching a war with Iran was clearly in neither the language, nor intent, of the 2002 AUMF.

Rep. Barbara Lee's bill to repeal the 2002 AUMF will prevent the administration from abusing this dangerous legal interpretation in the future, help rein in the president's out-of-control warmaking, and reassert Congress's constitutionally-vested control over matters of war and peace.

Blocking Funding for Unauthorized War

Rep. Khanna's bill serves two important purposes: preventing funds from being used for an unauthorized war with Iran, and clarifying unequivocally that statutory authorization for war with Iran does not already exist. Despite Trump's blatantly false claims, this legislation would do nothing to prevent the president from defending the nation or U.S. forces from a truly imminent attack.

Trump launching an unauthorized war with Iran would *already* be illegal. This bill simply restates that fact and puts muscle behind it. The only thing the bill would stop Trump from doing is breaking the law and violating the Constitution. Using Congress's constitutional power of the purse makes unequivocally clear that the only way to go to war with Iran is to get Congress' pre-approval. This legislation simply upholds existing law and the constitutional separation of powers by stating that the president may only act in self-defense – without Congress – in the face of a truly imminent threat.

The president should not be able to wage endless war with impunity. It is the responsibility of Congress to assert itself as a co-equal branch of government and rein in the imperial presidency. Rep. Khanna's legislation does just that.

A Hard-Fought Victory

The path toward this victory has been long. Many members of Congress have been working tirelessly for years to reassert congressional authority over war powers. Yesterday's bills were passed in response to Trump reckless march to war with Iran, but the threat to our democracy has existed since the 2001 and 2002 AUMFs were passed.

Win Without War, along with our partners in Congress and the broader grassroots progressive movement, have called for a repeal of the 2002 AUMF and comparable legislation preventing the use of funds for unauthorized wars for years. Just this past summer, versions of Rep. Khanna and Rep. Lee's legislation were [passed](#) as amendments to the House's FY2020

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National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Both, however, were [stripped](#) out of the final version in conference negotiations with the Senate. Despite that loss, the House has once again proven its willingness to stand against the imperial presidency and block Trump's unilateral march to war.

What comes next

These bills will now head to the Senate, where Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jim Risch will control their path forward. Even if this legislation does not receive a vote in the Senate, Senators will soon vote on Senator Tim Kaine's war powers resolution that demands no war with Iran.

In determining their votes, Senators should remember that the majority of people in the U.S. oppose a war with Iran and want Congress to reassert its war-making authority. While Trump has already declared his intent to veto the House-passed bills, and any war powers resolution, should they come to his desk, this fight is important. For too long, the president has waged war across the world with little oversight or constraint. As Congress continues to vote, it's clearer than ever that the momentum is shifting. Yesterday's votes are a sign of what's to come.

BURIED LEDES

Win Without War and partners in the People Over Pentagon coalition delivered over 140,000 signatures [calling on](#) Congress **to spend less on the military and more on human needs**. Watch the livestream of the delivery with Reps. Pramila Jayapal and Ilhan Omar [here](#).

The Reagan administration claimed journalists who reported on the 1981 El Mozote massacre in El Salvador were lying. This week, **a retired general of the Salvadoran army** [acknowledged](#) the mass killings, vindicating the reporters.

5 Native American tribes have [filed](#) **a complaint with the United Nations** accusing the U.S. government of not protecting their communities from climate change.

Saudi hackers are [using](#) **Israeli technology to attempt to gather data from phones**, including from prominent journalists and critics of the Saudi regime.

The U.S. [dropped](#) nearly **eight times as many bombs on Afghanistan in 2019** as it did in 2015. How many is that? Our own Stephen Miles helps you [visualize](#).

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The revolving door of the corrupt military-industrial complex [spins on](#) as **ex-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joe Dunford joins the board of Lockheed Martin.**

A British immigrant [died](#) in ICE custody. The cruelty is the point.

82% of violent deaths occur in nations not experiencing conflict. Watch [this talk](#) to explore the linkage between corruption and violence in middle-income democracies.

Trump's [more aptly named](#) Middle East peace sham, [crafted](#) by a man with zero qualifications, has been denounced by Palestine, Jordan, Europe and everyone who has taken Middle East Politics 101.

Iranian immigrants did not come to the U.S. to be accused by Senators of a [BS conspiracy theory](#).

And finally, election season is heating up in Vermont with incumbent **Lincoln the goat and challenger Sammy the dog locked in a highly competitive [race](#) for (honorary) mayor of Fair Haven.**