Prevent War With Iran

The Trump Administration is Increasing the Risk of War with Iran

The Trump administration’s “maximum pressure” campaign is escalating tensions with Iran in ways experts say could “set the scene for military confrontation.”

- Designating the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization over the objection of top Pentagon and CIA officials has significantly increased tensions with Iran, as evidenced by Iran designating U.S. Central Command as a terrorist organization and the U.S. as a state sponsor of terrorism.
- Relying on a speculative Israeli intelligence assessment about unspecified Iranian threats to U.S. interests, national security advisor John Bolton used the routine deployment of an aircraft carrier group to the region as an opportunity to threaten Iran with “unrelenting force” should Iran or any of its proxies attack U.S. interests in the region. Multiple U.S. officials have said the administration is exaggerating the threat posed by Iran.
- Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), a member of the Armed Services Committee, has called for restraint, stating that classified intel he has seen “doesn’t show existential threats... to U.S. interests.”
- The administration has reviewed plans from the Pentagon to send up to 120,000 U.S. soldiers to the Middle East to “counter Iran.”
- President Trump continues to make military threats about war with Iran on Twitter.

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 preventative force against Iran would be illegal and unconstitutional.
- The Trump administration has been promoting incredibly dubious claims of collaboration between Iran and al Qaeda, claims disputed by senior U.S. intelligence officials.
- Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) asked Secretary of State Mike Pompeo if he would rule out using the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) to attack Iran. Pompeo said he’d “prefer to just leave that to lawyers,” leaving open the possibility of the administration relying on the 2001 AUMF to justify the use of force against Iran.

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War with Iran Would Be a Disaster

Experts have said U.S. military action against Iran would turn into a long war of attrition. Such a conflict risks further destabilizing the broader region.

- Iran’s military doctrine\textsuperscript{12} is designed specifically to counter enemies with greater technological superiority. Dr. Trita Parsi, President of the National Iranian American Council, warned that in the event of war, Iran would focus on inflicting \textit{as many U.S. casualties as possible}\textsuperscript{13} early on in an effort to crush the U.S. will to fight.
- U.S. wargames have found\textsuperscript{14} that guerrilla attacks by speed boats could lay waste to a U.S. fleet in the Persian Gulf.
- Iran has the \textit{largest stockpile of ballistic missiles}\textsuperscript{15} in the Middle East, which could devastate U.S. forces in the region.
- Cybersecurity experts fear Iran’s increasingly \textit{sophisticated cyber capabilities}\textsuperscript{16} could “exact a very real price on American companies and our people.”
- Going to war with Iran could fuel anti-American sentiment and violent extremism in Iran and the region for generations to come. In a region with multiple actors already at war in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, escalation between the U.S. and Iran could spiral into a \textit{wider regional war}\textsuperscript{17} with unimaginable consequences.

Only Diplomacy Can Reduce Tensions

Good-faith diplomatic efforts must be made to protect the important gains of the Iran Nuclear Agreement and to reduce dangerously high tensions between the U.S. and Iran.

- Iran’s potential reductions\textsuperscript{18} in compliance with the Iran Nuclear Agreement are unfortunate, but not surprising as Iran has lost many of the benefits it was promised under the Iran agreement due to the Trump administration’s unilateral withdrawal.
- Diplomatic channels established during negotiations can be crucial for peacefully de-escalating potentially tense situations, as evidenced by the \textit{swift release of U.S. soldiers}\textsuperscript{19} captured at sea in January 2016.

Steps Members of Congress Can Take

- \textit{Co-sponsor the Prevention of Unconstitutional War with Iran Act of 2019}, S. 1039 introduced by Sen. Tom Udall (D-NM), or H.R. 2354 introduced by Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA), to prohibit funding for kinetic military operations against Iran without congressional approval.
- \textit{Co-sponsor H.R. 2829} introduced by Rep. Andy Levin (D-MI) to clarify that Congress has not provided authorization for the use of military force against Iran.
- \textit{Sound the alarm over the administration’s provocative posturing} toward Iran and make statements opposing war.
- \textit{Oppose legislation or amendments that needlessly increase tensions} between the U.S. and Iran.

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