

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2018

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. President:

President Bashar al-Assad's continuing abuse and murder of the Syrian people is abhorrent. The world is rightly horrified by his regime's use of chemical weapons, including the regime's alleged attack in the city of Douma on April 7<sup>th</sup>. We urge you to join the international community to bring about a peaceful end to the civil war in Syria.

In recent days, you have publicly signaled your intent to undertake military action in response to the alleged chemical weapons attack this past weekend. Furthermore, members of your administration have indicated that you have the authority to conduct such a strike in the absence of specific congressional authorization without explaining the underlying legal basis for their assertion. The use of U.S. military capabilities to conduct offensive action against another nation is a momentous decision that poses serious risks to the lives of U.S. military personnel involved and the possibility of escalation into a broader conflict.

This issue is of critical importance and the American people should be fully informed about your rationale for deploying American military power and the objectives of any U.S. military action in Syria. As previous Commanders-in-Chief have done in similar situations, we believe you should present a clear public articulation of these matters to the American people at the earliest appropriate time.

Additionally, given your public statements and those of other members of the administration related to potential military action in Syria, we ask that you promptly provide the legal basis for any potential or anticipated military action in response to the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime in Douma on April 7<sup>th</sup>. As part of your response, we also ask that you fully explain any limiting principles on the use of the U.S. military to conduct military action absent a specific authorization for the use of military force by the Congress.

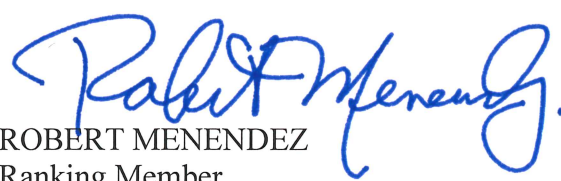
Sincerely,



RICHARD J. DURBIN  
Vice Chairman  
Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Defense



JACK REED  
Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee



ROBERT MENENDEZ  
Ranking Member  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee