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July 11, 2022

Dear Representative,

I write to urge you to vote in favor of the important amendment introduced by Representative Jamaal Bowman to reaffirm the Constitutional requirement that Congress debate and vote to authorize troops operating in harm's way in Syria.

I was among the strongest supporters of the Syrian opposition. I resigned from my position as Ambassador to Syria in 2014 due to my strong belief that the Obama administration policy was unworkable. That policy sought negotiations to end the Syrian civil war, but did not put enough pressure on Assad and the Russians to compel them to negotiate. Such a policy, I argued, required far greater material support and training to elements of the Syrian opposition willing eventually to negotiate with Assad after they mounted an effective insurgency to bring Assad to the table.

Now U.S. policy towards Syria, and in particular our military action there, urgently needs greater Congressional scrutiny. I question whether an open-ended military commitment in Syria that has so far cost about \$15 billion is in the best interests of the United States. Thankfully we have lost no soldiers killed in Syria since 2019. Still, the U.S. military operation in Syria after almost seven years has no clear final goal, no strategy identified to achieve the goal nor benchmarks by which to measure progress. Congress should demand an explanation of the strategy and metrics by which to judge progress as well as timelines for achieving interim steps. In addition, the Congress should press for consideration of more creative diplomatic approaches to Syria as it decides whether to authorize further U.S. military operations in Syria.

Passage of Representative Bowman's amendment can serve as an important catalyst for overdue Congressional oversight, and I strongly urge you to vote in favor.

Sincerely,



Robert S. Ford
U.S. Ambassador to Syria 2011-2014