

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 24, 2026

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wicker:

We request that you convene a public Armed Services Committee hearing with Department of Defense (DoD) leadership regarding the poor planning and mismanagement of extended deployments to support Iran operations and the impact on our troops. Recent reports of sailors suffering from severe mental health issues amid deteriorating conditions on the USS Abraham Lincoln have only added to a disturbing pattern of failures to adequately plan and support our troops, who have been away from their families indefinitely as the Iran War drags on.

On August 11, [Military Times reported](#) that multiple sailors on board the USS Abraham Lincoln currently supporting Iran operations attempted to jump overboard, a heartbreaking decision in effort to escape the mental health toll of an extended deployment that was planned to end in May but is now at 9 months and counting. [Horrific messages](#) from military families described other poor conditions onboard the Lincoln, including food rationing, rotten meals, shortages of supplies like water and soap, overflowing toilets, broken facilities and disrupted mail delivery. It took nine months for the Navy to relieve the Lincoln with the USS George Washington, after conditions had reached such severity that military families directly confronted the Acting Secretary of the Navy. This has revealed the real impact of unplanned deployment extensions on our ability to maintain and logistically support our ships in a contested environment.

This is not the first time during this war that we have seen the consequences of extended deployments onboard an aircraft carrier or even other ships. Sailors on the USS Ford experienced hundreds of broken toilets and significant damage from a non-combat fire that injured multiple sailors and affected 100 sleeping berths and forced it to redirect to Greece for emergency repair. After this emergency repair, the Ford was again sent back to the Red Sea to support Iran operations – eventually completing 11 months of deployment, even though the Navy tries to limit deployments to seven months. Military families of servicemembers on board the multiple ships as part of the Carrier Strike Groups (CSGs) in the region have reported [emotional and financial strain](#) from [the unplanned extensions](#), struggling to [balance work and childcare](#) and caught in limbo with disrupted plans every time orders are extended.

Both the Lincoln and the Ford Carrier Strike Groups (CSGs) were redirected from their original missions to support President Trump's unauthorized wars of choice. The Lincoln originally deployed in November to conduct routine patrols in the Indo-Pacific, but was redirected to the Middle East in January to support the start of the Iran operations. The Ford ultimately served a whopping 11 months at sea – redirected three times from an original mission to support

deterrence in Europe, to operations in the Caribbean Sea and against Venezuela, to Iran operations. This Administration has failed to explain why it has insisted on stretching our sailors in this way without adequate planning – let alone for unauthorized wars of choice.

The strain on our troops is not confined to the Navy. In fact, our offices and press have heard [story](#) after [story](#) of Soldiers and Airmen, including [National Guardsmen and Reservists](#), seeing their deployments extended with uncertainty about when they will be relieved by other units and can return home to their families. Bases in the Middle East originally designed to support a specific footprint have been stretched to support a much larger scale of units now stationed there – and conditions are deteriorating as too many people meet too little space and supplies.

The toll this unauthorized, disastrous war is taking on our troops is unconscionable. Troops are suffering because of this Administration's inability to end this war or make the environment safe enough for our servicemembers to be delivered the food, medication or supplies they need.

All these developments strongly indicate a systemic failure of planning and adaptation by the Secretary of Defense and senior DoD leaders. It is appalling that in month seven of the Iran War, the Secretary of Defense still continues to fail to anticipate and plan for the second-order consequences of the President's choices to continue this war with no end.

Military families and the American people deserve answers about when our heroes will come home and how DoD plans to restore military readiness that has been drained by this war. Supply shortages and unjustified extended deployments also have a real impact on our ability to recruit and retain our servicemembers – why would anyone sign up to fight when they fear they will be exploited and left without supplies, recourse or support? Not only do we owe our troops the bare minimum respect and support they deserve, but it is a recruitment and retention imperative.

The stakes couldn't be higher. The longer this Administration fails to articulate a plan to end this disastrous war, the longer our brave servicemembers will pay the price.

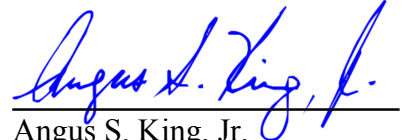
We request a public hearing to help Congress and the public better understand how we got here and how the Department will ensure it never happens again. We call on the Department to explain to Congress, military families and the American people how it assesses and justifies the readiness impacts of these extended deployments, how it plans for relief rotations and what accounts for the systemic failures to provide troops with the support they need to do the mission the President has asked of them without authorization. Importantly, the Department must justify and detail exactly how it plans to sustain our troops in this war indefinitely – as the President's negotiations continue to fail.

As Members of this Committee, we take seriously our responsibility to make sure the U.S. military is properly led, well-resourced, supported and able to conduct its missions. We believe it is critical that we conduct public oversight to ensure that whenever we ask the military to answer the Nation's call, we will have their backs – not leave them stranded with no support. For these reasons, we urge the Committee to convene a hearing at the earliest opportunity to examine these issues directly with DoD leaders.

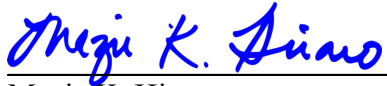
Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



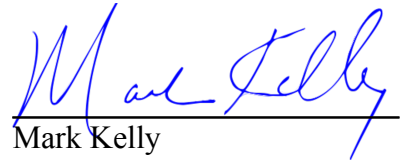
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