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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2020, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with time equally allocated between the parties and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

CONGRESS NEEDS TO FIX THE WAR POWERS ACT

The SPEAKER. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Madam Speaker, undeniably the worst foreign policy mistake in the history of the United States of America was the invasion of Iraq based on phoned-up intelligence that was trumpeted by Dick Cheney, Scooter Libby, and other characters in the Bush administration.

But just this last week, President Trump took us to the verge of an even worse foreign policy mistake in the Middle East. He recklessly and impatiently took us to the brink of war that would have been even worse.

Now, yesterday, I went to the so-called intelligence briefing. They offered no intelligence regarding immediate imminent threats to the United States, our troops, or allies in the region.

They did certainly make a case that Soleimani was a rotten guy and he was responsible for many, many deaths of Americans and others in the region, but that is all recited past history that

didn't talk about any immediate threats or any intelligence that would lead to it.

They further went on to say that the legal justification was the Authorization for Use of Military Force in the invasion of Iraq, which, of course, was based on phony intelligence regarding weapons of mass destruction he didn't have. So that is even more extraordinary if you think about that.

Last week, also, the President tweeted what he said was his compliance with war powers. He then went on to tweet a threat of all-out war against Iran, and then he went further to tweet that he would order that war crimes be committed during an all-out war against Iran.

That was walked back a little bit by the Secretary of Defense who said they would follow the law. And then Trump later said: I like laws. I will follow the laws. So he walked back from saying he was going to destroy cultural threats a little bit.

Today, on the floor of the House, we will take up a rebuke of the President for those actions. Hopefully, we will go further and we will repeal the Authorization for Use of Military Force from 2002 based on fake intelligence.

We will further, hopefully, take up legislation that was adopted as an amendment to the defense authorization last summer, with bipartisan support, to say that the President couldn't initiate hostilities against Iran without first coming to Congress.

Congress has the authority, and only Congress has the authority, to declare war. Once we are at war, the President, as Commander in Chief, can utilize the Armed Forces as he sees fit.

But the President does not have the authority. This is extraconstitutional when it isn't an attack or an imminent attack on the United States, its troops, or its citizens.

So we need to do those things.

Further, we need to fix the War Powers Act. That was adopted after the il-

legal actions of another President, Richard Nixon, the bombing of Cambodia.

There were two versions. One followed the Constitution, and said, no, no, any offensive actions into hostilities you first have to come to Congress. The second version said, well, you can initiate them, but you have to report within 48 hours, and if Congress doesn't authorize it within 60 days, you have to withdraw. That was defective and weak and doesn't reflect at all the congressional duties of this body.

Now, I know a lot of Members love to dodge the issues of war and peace—it is the toughest vote you can make—and that is essentially what they did at the time, a wink and a nod: Well, we will let the President do these things. Hey, if it works out, we will take credit; if it doesn't work out, oh, well, then we can castigate him later.

So I have introduced, yet again, a bill that comprehensively reforms the War Powers Act to reflect the constitutional authorities and duties of the United States Congress. It would say that the President cannot initiate hostilities without first coming to Congress.

It would define what consultation means. It doesn't mean a tweet to the Congress. It doesn't mean sending up a letter. It means a meaningful consultation. It establishes an executive legislative consultative group.

It also includes, most importantly, a sunset clause for any authorization by Congress.

I mean, a thousand years from now, the United States, I guess, if we don't repeal the 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force, can attack whatever Iraq is a thousand years from now. That is absolutely absurd.

Finally, it does give Congress the authority and standing to go to the courts should the President violate the Constitution and the War Powers Act in the future—any President.

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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I have had problems with both Democratic and Republican Presidents over this issue over the years: Clinton, Bosnia; Bush, obviously in a number of cases; and then Obama in Libya and other things that they did, also based on the fake intelligence in the 2002 authorization.

So let's first vote today. That is just a starting point in reasserting our constitutional duties.

IRAN IS A TERROR STATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HILL of Arkansas. Mr. Speaker, as a terror state, Iran is no friend of the United States or our allies. For three decades, Iran has been a leading state sponsor of terrorism and an eager empire builder. Its history of money laundering, terrorism, and murder of U.S. soldiers is undeniable.

Last week, the President, as Commander in Chief, took the legal and decisive action when he eliminated terrorist combatant leader Qasem Soleimani from the battlefield. Across the years in the region, this man of murder has the blood of hundreds of thousands of innocents on his hands.

To refer to this combat operation as an assassination or to offer moral equivalence between Soleimani and a state-sponsored terror organization with a rule-following nation actively engaged in the family of nations is laughable.

In my view, Soleimani ranks up there with the worst exporters of terror in the region, including the likes of Osama bin Laden or al-Baghdadi, the most recent demised head of ISIS.

Over these three decades, the United States and our allies have faced greater and more violent Iranian or Iranian proxy attacks orchestrated by the terror general Soleimani against the United States and our allies, dating as far back as 1983, when Iran's proxy Hezbollah committed the Beirut, Lebanon, bombing, killing 241 marines.

Soleimani, Iran, Hezbollah, and their thirst for violence is well documented and undeniable. In the face of this record and their very aggressive actions of the last few weeks, including the killing of an American contractor, targeting of U.S. forces, attacking Saudi Arabian oil operations, disrupting shipping in the Persian Gulf, shooting down an American drone, and then blatantly and aggressively attacking our Embassy in Baghdad, President Trump has been quite restrained during the course of that record.

However, the killing of an American contractor and orchestrating that storming and destruction at the American Embassy in Baghdad and the eminent planning of additional threats that this Congress learned the details of yesterday and attacks potentially on American troops or diplomats was the final straw.

Mr. Speaker, the provocateur is Iran, not President Trump. The assassin is Soleimani, not President Trump. The destabilizing force in the region is Iran, not the United States.

Yesterday, President Trump reiterated that the United States does not seek to start a war with Iran. His recent actions have sent an unambiguous signal to Iran and their proxies: Harm Americans, pay a price.

President Trump's objectives are clear: End Iran's export of terror; end its advancing regional ballistic missile capabilities; and prohibit their obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Instead, President Trump encourages the Iranian people to assert their own aspirations and form a more open and pluralistic future for their children and their children's children. This rich, historic land deserves to return to a time when the beautiful, intelligent Iranian people chart their own course for good, as citizens of a country eager to be part of the family of nations.

SAY NO TO ANOTHER WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Massachusetts (Ms. PRESSLEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in solidarity with the thousands of patriots who are taking to the streets of towns and cities throughout our Nation later today, taking to the streets to stand up, to speak out, and to say no to yet another war in the Middle East.

Less than 48 hours ago, our Nation was gripped by fear as we watched missiles rain down on our servicemembers and other allied forces in Iraq, an attack that was a direct response to this administration's reckless and impulsive decisions to assassinate a high-ranking military leader in Iran.

Like so many of my colleagues, I prayed. I prayed for all of the servicemembers and their families. I prayed for the innocent civilians in Iraq who once again find themselves in the crossfire in a battlefield of our own making. I prayed for peace.

But I also know perfectly well that the people of the Massachusetts 7th did not send me to Washington, D.C., to just pray. As a woman of faith, I will continue to send prayers up and to work for peace. But what this moment demands and what this country deserves is a strategy.

For more than 3 years now, this administration has been devoid of a coherent approach, instead implementing our Nation's foreign policy like a game of Battleship. They have actively incited further conflict in the region, abandoned diplomacy, and isolated our country from even our strongest allies.

The administration tore up the international agreement keeping Iran from developing nuclear weapons. The administration then engaged in a maximum pressure campaign that has rav-

aged the Iranian economy and harmed innocent civilians.

Yesterday, the White House had the opportunity to change course. Instead, we heard more of the same.

Let me be clear: We cannot allow our country to be lied into another war. We have the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of our past.

For nearly two decades, endless wars have claimed the lives of hundreds and thousands of civilians and servicemembers alike. An entire generation has only known war. Millions of refugees have been permanently displaced.

I remind my colleagues today that war is never inevitable. We reject the false choice between peace and security.

The 116th Congress is a fundamentally different Congress, and it is time to advocate for a fundamentally different foreign policy: foreign policy centered in the dignity and humanity of all people.

Prayers alone will not suffice. We need prayers and strategy. This is our chance. Let me be abundantly clear. The American people do not want war.

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WAR POWERS RESOLUTION DOES NOT LIMIT THE PRESIDENT'S POWER TO ACT WITHOUT CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BARR) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to a dangerous and partisan resolution offered by my Democrat colleagues designed to handcuff our President and limit his constitutional authorities as Commander in Chief to defend our Nation against Iranian aggression.

The resolution before us today needlessly politicizes our national security and shows that Democrats have once again put their partisan agenda ahead of the American people simply because they do not like President Trump.

Let's be clear. President Trump's decisive and defensive action to eliminate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force commander, Qasem Soleimani, is not the reason for the recent escalation between the United States and Iran. The President ordered the strike because of Iran's own escalation and aggression, for which General Soleimani was largely and personally responsible.

For over 40 years, Iran and its proxies have been attacking U.S. interests and our allies, but since the flawed Iran nuclear deal, under which the regime received billions of dollars in sanctions relief, the Islamic republic has used that economic windfall to accelerate its support for terrorist proxies, restart its ballistic missile program—in violation of U.N. resolutions—and cheat on its denuclearization aims.

My colleagues have heard the quote of the late Senator Arthur Vandenberg,