



FAQ on S.J. Res. 7, to End Unauthorized U.S. Military Involvement in Yemen

*In the coming days, the Senate is expected to vote on S.J. Res. 7, a bipartisan joint resolution directing the removal of U.S. armed forces from military operations in Yemen unauthorized by Congress. Senators Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Mike Lee (R-UT), and Chris Murphy (D-CT) introduced S.J.Res.7 on January 30, 2019, which is identical to S.J. Res. 54 as passed by the Senate in December 2018, by a vote of 56-41. **Win Without War, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, and Indivisible call on all Senators to support S.J. Res. 7.***

1. What does the legislation do?

If enacted, S.J. Res. 7 would end [unauthorized](#) U.S. military involvement in the Saudi- and UAE-led coalition's intervention in Yemen against Houthi rebels. This support has included [mid-air refueling to coalition warplanes conducting anti-Houthi missions](#), intelligence sharing (including, reportedly, [surveillance feeds](#) from U.S. drones) to assist with target selection, and [targeting advice](#) to Saudi-led coalition military personnel in the coalition's Riyadh-based joint air operations center. Although former Secretary of Defense James Mattis [announced the end of refueling assistance](#) in November 2018, this legislation would preclude the resumption of refueling support without explicit congressional authorization. Coalition airstrikes remain the leading [cause](#) of civilian casualties in the war according to the United Nations, and a [driver](#) of the world's worst humanitarian crisis. This legislation would not end or limit U.S. arm sales.

2. How would passage of the legislation impact the fight against AQAP and ISIS in Yemen?

The passage of the resolution does not take a position on the U.S. military campaign against Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The two missions are related, however, in that ending the Saudi/UAE-coalition's intervention is essential to undermining extremist groups' appeal in Yemen. In fact, [CNN](#) recently reported that the UAE and Saudi Arabia have diverted U.S.-made MRAP vehicles and TOW anti-tank missiles to Yemeni proxy forces affiliated with AQAP. Furthermore, an [Associated Press investigation](#) revealed that UAE-backed militias have recruited hundreds of AQAP fighters to their ranks to fight against the Houthis. [U.S. officials](#) have confirmed the accuracy of this report, further underscoring the concern that the war is exacerbating extremism in Yemen.

3. Why does the War Powers Resolution (WPR) apply to U.S. involvement in Yemen's war?

Section 8(c) of the War Powers Resolution ([50 U.S.C. Chapter 33](#)) defines the "introduction of the United States Armed Forces in hostilities" to include "the assignment of member of such armed forces to command, coordinate, participate in the movement of, or accompany the regular or irregular military forces of any foreign country or government when such military forces are engaged, or there exists an imminent threat that such forces will become engaged, in hostilities."

The WPR applies because U.S. military personnel have provided mid-air refueling for Saudi-led coalition bombers, and, by providing intelligence for targeting assistance, are involved in the coordination of Saudi-led coalition forces actively engaged in hostilities. **Congress intended for the WPR to apply such situations.** The Senate report accompanying the WPR at the time of adoption (1973) [noted](#) the legislation sought "to prevent secret, unauthorized military support activities" in the wake of the Vietnam war that began with the introduction of "U.S. advisors."

4. How would passage of the bill impact the situation on the ground in Yemen?

Ending U.S. military support for the intervention as a matter of law rather than one of presidential discretion would send an unmistakable signal to the Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition that U.S. support is not a blank check and that the coalition needs to agree to a ceasefire and negotiate in good faith.

Aid group Oxfam America noted, “It was no coincidence that on the same day the Senate passed the War Powers Resolution in December 2018, we saw the most substantive and encouraging breakthroughs in peace talks,” and upon its reintroduction this year, declared, “It’s time to remind the world that Americans will not stand by while our government further imperils millions of innocent people caught in a bloody, senseless war.”

Only de-escalating the intervention, with its U.S.-supported airstrikes on [markets](#), [schools](#), [hospitals](#), and [weddings](#), and ending the coalition’s blockade of vital air and sea ports can alleviate the crisis that threatens [12 million people with famine](#). As former CIA analyst Bruce Riedel [said](#), if the U.S. and U.K. “tonight told King Salman that this war has to end, it would end tomorrow.”

5. What is Iran’s involvement in Yemen and what would this resolution do to reduce it?

Withdrawing U.S. military support will help reduce Iran’s influence in Yemen. Since the war’s start, the Houthis have not acted as an Iranian proxy force akin to Hezbollah; rather, Iranian support for the Houthis has been limited and opportunistic, and it has increased as the Saudi and UAE-led coalition’s campaign has escalated. Further, a recent [CNN](#) investigation found, Houthi militias have seized MRAPs previously sold to the UAE by the U.S. As a result, Iran may be able to deconstruct U.S.-made MRAPs and find their weak points, thereby improving the design of IEDs used by their proxy forces in the region.

As Katie Zimmerman from the American Enterprise Institute has [pointed out](#), “giving more bullets and bombs to the Saudis will make things worse, rather than better.... It is likely to drive Yemeni rebel factions even further under Iranian control and enable the Saudis to continue to ignore a growing threat in Yemen from ISIS and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).”

6. Why now?

Congressional pressure has influenced the Trump administration’s approach toward this crisis. Last October, Secretary of State Pompeo and former [Secretary of Defense Mattis](#) made statements on calling for a cessation of hostilities and renewed negotiations in October. In November, ahead of the Senate vote on S.J.Res.54, the administration ended refueling for the coalition. In addition, as Oxfam America [noted](#), “It was no coincidence that on the same day the Senate passed the War Powers Resolution in December 2018, we saw the most substantive and encouraging breakthroughs in peace talks.”

Now, Congress has an opportunity to speak with one voice to lock in this progress and further curtail U.S. complicity in the coalition’s war crimes and the humanitarian crisis. Roughly half of all Yemenis—[12 million](#)—are on the brink of starvation. Congress can use its leverage to help save lives in the world’s largest humanitarian crisis. By ending all unauthorized U.S. military involvement, Congress will reassert its own war powers and send the message to the Saudi-led coalition and the Trump administration that their only path forward is pursuing a diplomatic resolution to the conflict.