

Action Sheet: January 2021

We seek a world free of war and the threat of war

Advocacy Teams have been lobbying and educating our members of Congress on congressional war authority and the Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMFs) for over five years. Our advocacy has vastly expanded bipartisan congressional support for reasserting war authority. Now, as we head into 2021, one thing is clear: **This is the year to repeal the 2001 and 2002 AUMFs.**

For nearly two decades, U.S. presidents have used the 2001 and 2002 AUMFs to justify military operations in at least 19 different countries. The Constitution says decisions about when our country goes to war should be made by Congress. But Congress has stood on the sidelines, spending money on wars without voting on the wars themselves. The consequences of sending U.S. soldiers and lethal weapons to other countries must be a matter of public debate via the people's branch.

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As a Quaker organization, FCNL opposes all war. As a matter of public policy, we believe Congress should debate and vote every time the president proposes taking our country to war, and evaluate the impact of those wars regularly. In the House, we have helped pass legislation to repeal both the 2001 and 2002 AUMFs. The next step is to persuade Congress to first repeal the 2002 Iraq AUMF, and then repeal the 2001 AUMF.

Get the Facts: Ending the Endless Wars

The Constitution

The founders of the United States specifically placed the power to declare war in the hands of Congress. The 2001 and 2002 AUMFs have been interpreted by three presidents to give the executive branch the power to wage war without congressional approval.

The 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force

Three days after 9/11, Congress gave the president advance permission to use military force against anyone who planned, authorized, committed, or aided those attacks, or who harbored such groups. By the authorization's own language, that should have only meant al Qaeda, who were responsible for the attacks, and the Taliban, who harbored al Qaeda in Afghanistan. But later, the Bush administration developed the concept of "associated forces" – a term that does

not appear in the 2001 AUMF – which three administrations have now used to expand the war to more than half a dozen groups around the world that had no connection to the 9/11 attacks, including ISIS. This is not what Congress intended in 2001; ISIS didn't even exist then. Congress didn't intend to start wars against al-Shabaab in Somalia or al-Nusra in Syria, but that's exactly what has happened.

The 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq

The 2002 Iraq AUMF authorized the 2003 invasion of Iraq to defend the United States against the threat of weapons of mass destruction possessed by the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. The Trump administration claimed that the 2002 Iraq AUMF also authorizes war against ISIS in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere, saying it allows the president to fight any threat “to or emanating from Iraq.” Indeed, in January 2020, the administration asserted that the 2002 Iraq AUMF authorized the assassination of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad. [Read more.](#)

Bipartisan Support Exists

Congress has twice voted to end U.S. military engagements abroad: first in April 2019, to end U.S. involvement in the Saudi-led war in Yemen, and second in April 2020, to terminate hostilities against Iran following the General Soleimani strike. The House has also twice voted, in 2019 and 2020, to repeal the 2002 Iraq AUMF. All these votes have been on a bipartisan basis. These actions demonstrate that there is bipartisan will in Congress to rein in presidential power and ever-expanding wars.

War Is Not the Answer.

More war has not brought more peace. After nearly two decades of war, it is long past time for Congress to acknowledge that U.S. war policies have contributed to more instability and violence. They have failed to reduce the threat of terrorism or keep Americans safe. The world only becomes a safer place when lawmakers engage in robust debate prior to authorizing any military attacks, when we invest in peacebuilding, diplomacy, and other measures to prevent violent conflict, and when we learn lessons from our actions and reflect on what it means to truly protect American security.

» Take Action

As soon as the new Congress is seated in early January, reach out to your members of Congress to request a meeting. Tell your story of why ending endless wars is important to you.

Then, ask your...

- Representatives to become original co-sponsors of legislation that will be proposed by Rep. Barbara Lee (CA-13) to [repeal the 2001](#) and [the 2002](#) AUMFs.
- Senators to reach out to Sens. Tim Kaine (VA) and Todd Young (IN) to offer support for the reintroduction of legislation to [repeal the 2002 Iraq AUMF](#) in the Senate.