

March 11, 2020

Rep. Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Eliot Engel
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee
2426 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Chairman Engel:

We write to you to express our deep concerns with the recently introduced U.S.–Africa Strategic Security Act, H.R. 6089, which aims to limit the withdrawal of United States Armed Forces currently deployed in Africa. While we welcome Congress' engagement on matters of peace and security, we are troubled by an approach that would effectively mandate a continued military presence. Such a mandate raises constitutional concerns and reinforces a strategy that is ill-equipped to provide for sustainable peace.

The Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States, led by the 9/11 Commission co-chairs Gov. Kean and Rep. Hamilton, clearly showed that armed groups that perpetuate terrorism continue to thrive despite U.S. military interventions. Such groups exploit exclusionary governance, political instability, and local conflicts -- which are better addressed through diplomatic engagement, peacebuilding, and targeted foreign assistance. By requiring a military response to political problems, this bill perpetuates bad policy and risks American lives. Additionally, justifying continued military presence in Africa as "great power competition" against Russia and China has had the effect of fueling militarism and eroding opportunities for multilateral cooperation, all at the expense of sustainable peace.

Additionally, Congress should not restrict the withdrawal from a military mission that it has not properly authorized in the first place. Article I, Sec. 8 of the U.S. Constitution places the power to go to war with Congress, and Congress has not authorized the use of force in this case. It is illogical for Congress to take action, then, to force a sustained military presence that it has not fulfilled its duty in authorizing. We note with dismay the eagerness of Congress to take action that preserves the U.S. global military footprint as compared with its reticence to aggressively oversee and restrict the unauthorized use of force, as is its constitutional duty.

Therefore, we urge you not to take up such legislation in your committees.

Sincerely,

Center for International Policy
Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy
Concerned Veterans for America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Win Without War