January 9, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20500

Mr. President,

We write to express concern that a trade of military strikes by the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran in Iraq may put the two countries on the path to a full-blown military conflict.

Your unilateral decision to kill Qassem Soleimani appears to have neither advanced U.S. and international security nor lessened the threats the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps poses to the region and beyond. While General Soleimani was implicated in the killing of hundreds of brave U.S. soldiers and personnel, this disproportionate response to recent Iranian provocations spurred a retaliatory ballistic missile strike by Iran against two Iraqi military bases that house U.S. military and coalition force members. Any future escalatory action by the United States could perpetrate a cycle of tit-for-tat military actions that would put our allies, partners, and civilians in the region at grave risk.

The apparent lack of rigorous planning for this important decision or a plan for de-escalation, as well as your defiance of the Congress — and its constitutionally defined role to declare war — heightens the security risk to all Americans. We urge the Administration to heed the below requests to avert a war that could lead to untold loss of life and trillions of dollars:

1. Cease any further military action against Iran without obtaining Congress’s express statutory authorization for the use of military force, consistent with the authority that Article I of the United States Constitution vests in Congress, and further clarified by the War Powers Resolution of 1973.

2. Share with Congress and the American people specifics of what Secretary of State Pompeo referenced as the “imminent threats to American lives” that preceded the targeted assassination of General Soleimani and Mahdi al-Mohandes of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), and why you selected the most extreme military option presented to you.

3. Engage in talks with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and/or senior Iranian leaders, as you have stated a willingness to do in the past, with the goal of agreeing to risk-reduction measures to defuse the current crisis and prevent an all-out war.

4. Make it clear that, while the United States shares the democratic aspirations of the Iranian people, it is not the intention of the United States to externally impose regime change on the Government of Iran. The future of Iran must be determined by the will of the Iranian
people, and the Iranian people alone.

5. Cease all threats against Iranian civilians and cultural sites and clarify that the United States is committed to following the laws of armed conflict. Targeting cultural sites with military action is a war crime under international law, as referenced by a U.N. Security Council resolution supported by your administration in 2017 and by the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property.

Mr. President, there is still time to avoid a catastrophic war with Iran. But that requires a sharp departure from your Administration’s lack of rigorous planning that have helped lead us to this perilous moment.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator
Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress