

BRIAN J. MAST
18TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

2182 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3026

171 SW FLAGLER AVENUE
STUART, FLORIDA 34994
(772) 781-3266

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0918

November 14, 2017

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding Iranian presence in Syria. We recently returned from the region, where we heard concerns from our close ally, Israel, about Iranian operations in Syria, particularly since the signing of a ceasefire last July, which set up de-escalation zones on Israel and Jordan's border.

Iran is providing substantial amounts of support to the Syrian regime, including funds, weapons, and personnel from the IRGC-Quds Force. Iran is estimated to have deployed about 1,300-1,800 IRGC soldiers and even some regular army special forces personnel to Syria, which would mark a significant departure from a historical policy of keeping regular army forces within Iran's borders. Iran is also directing Hizballah and other non-Syrian Shiite militia fighters to battle on behalf of the regime.

The experience of fighting in Syria has given way to a new generation of seasoned Hizballah fighters, who now have extensive know-how in offensive operations and in coordinating with the Syrian military and the Russian air force. As the tactical experience of its fighters has grown, so has its weapons stockpile. Hizballah's 150,000 rockets and missiles is larger than that of most states and could pose a grave military threat to Israel. Equally concerning, Iran is reportedly building weapons factories in Syria to produce precision guided missiles so that it would no longer have to ship weapons to Hizballah from Iran. Finally, Hizballah continues to receive weapons and training from a variety of sources, including Iran and Russia.

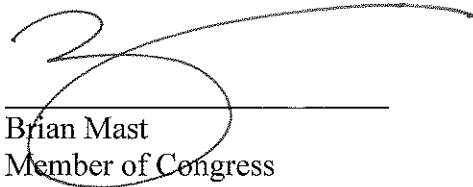
Should Iran be allowed to maintain a permanent military presence in Syria, it would pose a significant threat to Israel, Jordan, and United States interests. A permanent Iranian presence in Syria would connect Lebanon-based Hizballah to Iran via Iraq and Syria. This would give Iran the ability to project power from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea. Any agreement or policy that allows Iran to station forces on or near Israel and Jordan's border does not serve US interests.

We urge you to come to Congress with a strategy for Syria that includes how the United States plans to prevent Iran from gaining a permanent foothold on Israel and Jordan's doorstep and to block Iranian arms exports to Hizballah.

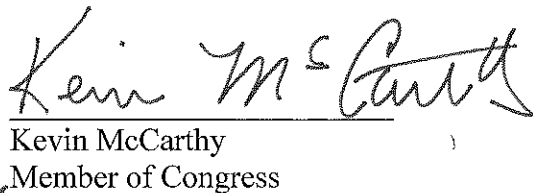
Sincerely,



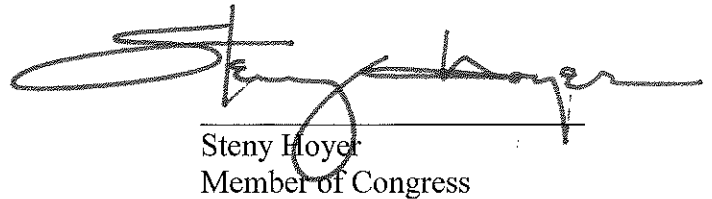
Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress



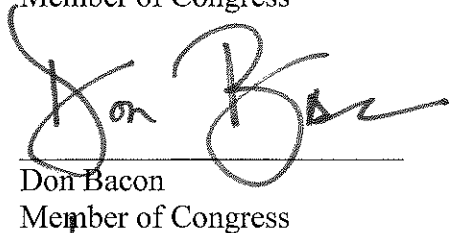
Brian Mast
Member of Congress



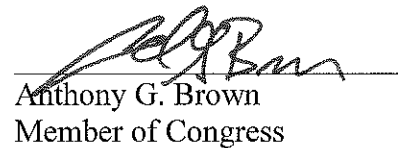
Kevin McCarthy
Member of Congress



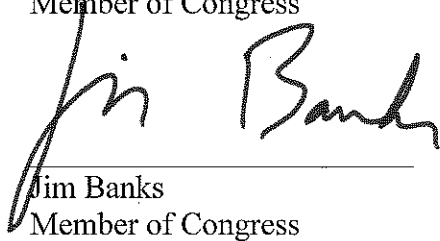
Steny Hoyer
Member of Congress



Don Bacon
Member of Congress



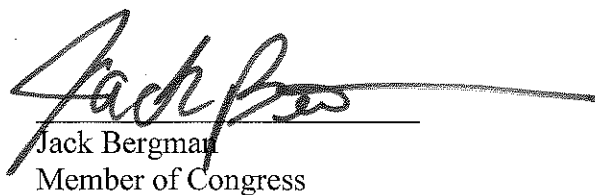
Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress



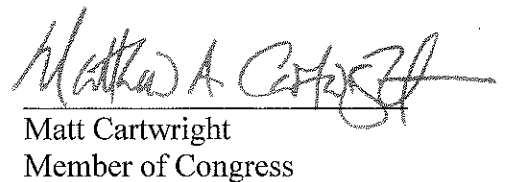
Jim Banks
Member of Congress



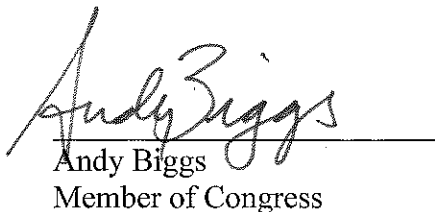
Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress



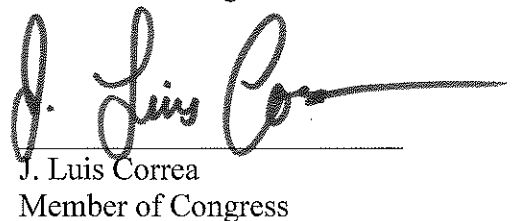
Jack Bergman
Member of Congress




Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress



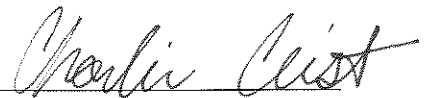
Andy Biggs
Member of Congress



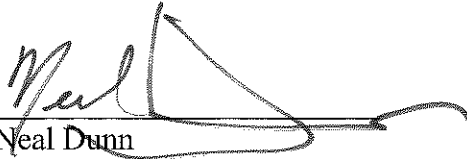
J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



James Comer
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist
Member of Congress



Neal Dunn
Member of Congress



Val B. Demings
Member of Congress



John J. Faso
Member of Congress



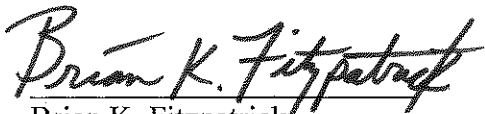
Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



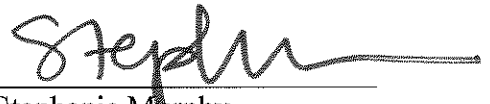
A. Drew Ferguson
Member of Congress



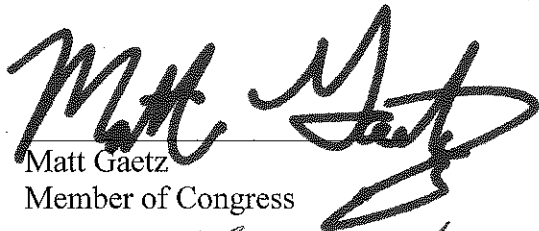
Gene Green
Member of Congress



Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress



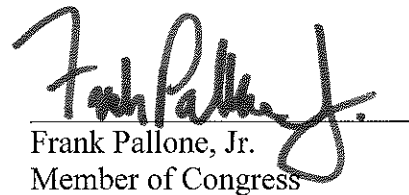
Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress



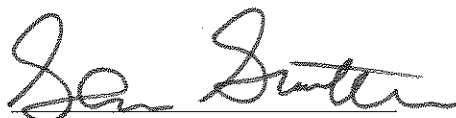
Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress



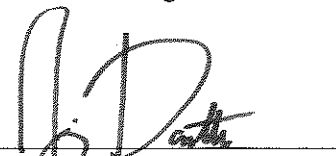
Greg Gianforte
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



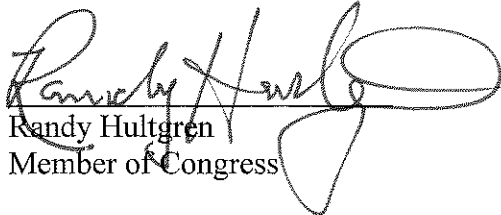
Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



J. French Hill
Member of Congress




Ben Ray Lujan
Member of Congress



Randy Hultgren
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Mike Johnson
Member of Congress



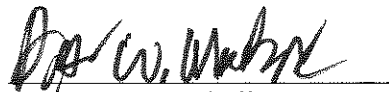
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



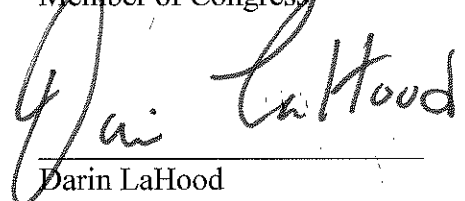
David Kustoff
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragan
Member of Congress



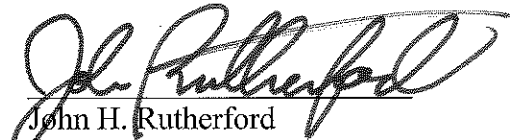
Roger W. Marshall
Member of Congress



Darin LaHood
Member of Congress



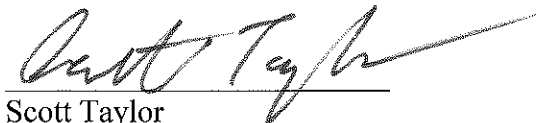
Keith J. Rothfus
Member of Congress



John H. Rutherford
Member of Congress



Lloyd Smucker
Member of Congress



Scott Taylor
Member of Congress

Claudia Tenney

Claudia Tenney
Member of Congress