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WARS

Ten reasons to vote against the use of military force

By **Rep. Dennis Kucinich**

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FILE - In this Dec. 10, 2012 file photo, fog obscures the Capitol dome on Capitol Hill in Washington. ((AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite))

Dear Colleague,

I was honored to serve in Congress for 16 years. During that time I provided information and helped to create debates over U.S. policies in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and other nations, defending the Article I, Section 8 responsibilities of Congress on matters of war and peace. Those of you who know me are aware that I avoid partisanship. I have challenged Republican and Democratic administrations alike.

Congress rightfully lacks confidence in this administration, given its bungling of a war against Libya and its general mishandling of international policy.

Why would Congress, as a co-equal branch of government, be so ready to give up its constitutional power to this president with an Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF), which represents a wholesale appropriation of war power?

This could be one of the most important votes you will ever cast, so I want to share with you, collegially, information that I hope will be of use in your deliberations.

I present some thoughts for your consideration as you enter into a momentous, new debate over the authorization of military force, this time against the Islamic State.

This could be one of the most important votes you will ever cast, so I want to share with you, collegially, information that I hope will be of use in your deliberations.

Here are 10 reasons why Congress should not grant the president authority to use military force against the Islamic State, based on fact, consequences and the U.S. Constitution:

1. ISIS is not a threat to the U.S. homeland.

Writing in [The American Conservative](#), Senior Editor Daniel Larison points out that the U.S. is taking on an unnecessary risk:

“... the U.S. mistakenly volunteers to address a regional security problem that poses no real threat to America, [while] its regional partners do as little as they can get away with, and in some cases stop doing even that in order to get the U.S. to take additional risks on their behalf.”

If the U.S. enters the fray, of course, regional partners will let us do the fighting.

There is no credible information available that indicates ISIS is a direct threat to the U.S. According to a Wall Street Journal article, [“Lawmakers Told Islamic State Isn’t Terror Threat on U.S. Soil,”](#) Congress has already been advised by U.S. counterterrorism officials that ISIS is not a threat to the U.S. homeland. Additionally, no new National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) has been produced alleging ISIS is a direct threat to America. However, an all-out U.S. war against ISIS could expose America to unnecessary threats, without any national security benefits.

2. The AUMF disingenuously calls for a “limited” war, while it is written to guarantee a permanent war, thus nullifying the power of the people’s representatives in Congress.

The framers of the U.S. Constitution were vitally concerned with the separation of powers, especially when it came to war. The power to declare war is vested in the Congress, in Article I, Section 8. The AUMF is written to enable the administration to conduct war, unilaterally, against any group, anywhere, at any time, over a period of three years, which opposing combatants will ignore.

If the administration succeeds in gaining approval for this particular AUMF, it will not have to return to Congress for approval as it takes its war from nation to nation. This is clearly contrary to the intent of the founders. It weakens Congress’ constitutional power (checks and balances) and undermines the Constitution.

3. The AUMF is a blank check and a fiscal black hole.

Since the AUMF sets the stage for a worldwide conflict, the cost of action will run into the hundreds of billions, if not trillions, of dollars, particularly if ground troops are involved in a war with religious overtones that go back 14 centuries. This war will inevitably require an emergency wartime supplemental appropriation and massive borrowing, adding to the \$16 trillion U.S. deficit and weakening the U.S. economy internally while providing great wealth to war profiteers who are already draining America’s wealth.

4. Regional armies appear to be rising to their own defense; U.S. presence will escalate war.

At this very moment ISIS is finally under pressure from Iraqi forces and pro-government militias, without U.S. boots on the ground. Additionally, ISIS is said to be experiencing internal pressures and conflicts. The [Washington Post](#) points out: “The

Islamic State is battling major offensives waged on at least three fronts — by Kurds in northern Syria, Kurds in northern Iraq and the combined force of Iraqi army and Shiite militia fighters advancing on the central Iraqi city of Tikrit.”

“...the risks of escalation are enormous. The biggest proponent of an American invasion is the Islamic State itself. The provocative videos, in which a black-hooded executioner addresses President Obama by name, are clearly made to draw America into the fight. An [U.S.] invasion would be a huge propaganda victory for jihadists worldwide ... they all believe that the United States wants to embark on a modern-day Crusade and kill Muslims.” — [Graeme Wood in the Atlantic Magazine](#), March 2015.

ISIS desperately needs to draw the U.S. in, to provide a rallying cry “against the foreign invader.” Why should America put our troops in harm’s way to provide this terrorist organization with new life, especially since armies in the region are stepping up to take the fight to ISIS?

In the AUMF, the president wants language that provides for U.S. ground forces to have “flexibility.” Read: “Boots on the ground!” If Congress passes the AUMF, it will have no say in the conduct of this war, except for appropriations.

5. The U.S. could get drawn into a worldwide religious war.

President Obama says, “We are not at war against Islam.” Congressional approval of the president’s request for the AUMF against the Islamic State will change that quickly. The AUMF will become a powerful recruiting tool for ISIS. How else will it be interpreted abroad, other than America at war with Islam? The U.S. could blunder into a complex, multidimensional conflict with explicit religious overtones, no matter what the president says.

ISIS wants to draw the U.S. into a religious war, to secure its role as the self-proclaimed defender of Islam against crusading foreign invaders.

Jihadis, anticipating a great war for Islam, have streamed into the region from all over the world to join ISIS ranks. An estimated 20,000 fighters from 90 nations have converged to fight alongside ISIS.

“This is a fight the Islamic State should be denied. And yet we should have learned that it is a bad idea to get into a ground war with people whose idea of victory is martyrdom.” — [Richard Cohen in the Washington Post](#), Feb. 23, 2015.

6. ISIS and Al Qaeda are divided. US re-entry into war could unite them.

ISIS and Al Qaeda are in a deep rift. ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri differ on strategy, tactics, methods, religious interpretations and on Baghdadi’s establishment of a caliphate.

An all-out U.S. military attack against ISIS will force Al Qaeda into an alliance it does not want, to join ISIS in a “fight against Western invaders,” creating a united front much stronger and more deadly to America and her allies.

7. A Solution: Follow ISIS’ money, and shut it down.

Where is ISIS getting its money? Up to 100,000 ISIS fighters are funded by Gulf State donors, identified in the past as being from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. Fully equipping and providing for one modern combat-ready soldier can cost \$850,000 to \$1,000,000 a year. ISIS’ army could be gaining \$85 billion to \$100 billion a year from various sources. We can either commit the U.S. military to another war, and the U.S. to further risk of impending attacks through the genesis of a new crusade, or we can fight this threat with intelligent power and high technology.

The administration must identify the specific sources of ISIS’ money, the individuals, the nations and the means of transfer, and shut them all down. It must sanction countries and individuals, tie up their bank accounts and commercial activities, freeze their assets and cancel their credit cards. Send platoons of accountants from the Treasury Department and the IRS into the fray, not platoons of U.S. soldiers. The U.S. must track oil sales, sales of antiquities and other valuables. Anyone

involved in any transactions of any kind with ISIS must be identified and sanctioned.

8. Solution: Cyber response.

The U.S. has the ability to identify and disrupt terror networks using digital technology. The CIA, in a major reorganization, has just created a fifth directorate, the Directorate of Digital Innovation, in recognition that intelligent power means using the most technologically advanced tools available. For its part, the NSA, which has admitted gaps, is also strengthening its information collecting. If, as Clausewitz said, "War is the continuation of politics by other means," in the 21st century we have other means to avoid a "boots on the ground" shooting war.

9. Endless wars enable Washington to ignore a domestic agenda.

It has been said that others attack us in order to destroy the way we live. Since 9/11, our own government has been responsible for shredding the Constitution through wars of choice and the imposition of a national security state with a permanent state of emergency.

The U.S. now spends about \$1 trillion a year to "defend" America using lethal means. Yet the more money we spend, the greater the peril. Why? Meanwhile, at home, America's middle class is falling apart, wages and benefits have dropped, retirement savings have vanished and Wall Street and war profiteers clean up. Americans, punished through unwarranted, massive surveillance, have forfeited constitutional rights and civil liberties. The right to privacy, which is protected by the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution, has been destroyed in the name of security.

10. The time has come for the U.S. to review the effects of interventionism.

ISIS grew out of U.S. interventions. Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria have disintegrated into chaos and violence. The price tag has been extraordinary in loss of human life and the cost of trillions of dollars. Bad judgments, misinformation and even lies have caused our nation to intervene, inspiring radical elements, stoking the fires of nationalism and engendering religious conflict. A great price has been paid and continues to be paid by our troops and their families.

This is the time for Congress and the administration to rethink the failed national security strategy, the failed doctrine of intervention, the failed "right to protect" doctrine and the abominable intrusion into the private lives of Americans.

Congress must refuse to give up its constitutional power under Article I, Section 8 and hold the executive branch in check on matters of war. It should defeat the AUMF and stop the administration from spreading war around the world.

Congress has a new opportunity to get control of runaway spending and keep America strong without wasting resources. In my early years in Congress, I was shocked to learn, from the inspector general to the Department of Defense, that DOD had over \$1 trillion in accounts that could not be reconciled. According to the GAO, the Army "lost track of 56 airplanes, 32 tanks, and 36 Javelin missile command launch units." The Constitution, Article I, Section 9, requires an accounting. With the national security budget at \$1 trillion annually, and trillions spent for wars of choice, and a trillion unaccounted for, and countless billions in cost overruns, the question is who is defending the taxpayers?

The Authorization for the Use of Military Force provides a new opportunity for a much-needed debate over the direction of America, our priorities and the best way to protect our nation from harm. Thank you for considering my views.

Respectfully,

Dennis Kucinich

Member of Congress 1997 - 2013

Dennis Kucinich joined the network in 2013 and currently serves as a contributor for FOX News Channel (FNC), providing

analysis and commentary across FNC's daytime and primetime programming.

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