

MATT SALMON
5TH DISTRICT, ARIZONA

2349 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-2635
(202) 226-4386 (FAX)

207 NORTH GILBERT ROAD
SUITE 209
GILBERT, AZ 85234
(480) 699-8239
(480) 699-4730 (FAX)

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0305

www.house.gov/salmon

COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
WESTERN HEMISPHERE

COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

September 17, 2015

The Honorable Ash Carter
Secretary
Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Carter:

For over two years, the Congress and the American people have waited for a legitimate strategy to disrupt and destroy the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Given this, it was troubling to hear the testimony of CENTCOM commander General Lloyd Austin before the Senate Armed Services Committee on September 16th. Not only do I share the American people's concerns over allegations that Department of Defense (DOD) analysts' reports on the status of our efforts to confront and kill ISIS fighters in the region are being altered for political expedience, but now we learn that after more than a year and nearly \$50 million, the U.S. has trained only 54 "moderate" Syrian rebels. Worse even, of that pathetically small and expensively constituted force, only 4 or 5 fighters remain in the field.

From the outset, I have been deeply concerned about this policy of training and arming "moderate" Syrian rebels as a means of defeating ISIS. First, I shared the apprehension of many national security experts that we could not reliably vet these fighters and adequately ensure that any weapons and training provided to them would not be later turned back against U.S. soldiers. Second, these opposition forces have made it clear that the removal of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, not the destruction of ISIS, was their primary goal.

Sadly, General Austin's testimony has confirmed my fears. As a result, I strongly urge you to abandon the Syrian fighter policy and instead focus on developing a regional multi-faceted strategy to defeat ISIS, which should include arming the Kurdish Peshmerga forces that have a proven track record of success against ISIS in their region.

It is long past time for the Administration to develop a realistic and implementable strategy to confront and destroy ISIS. The American people expect a strategy that ensures we defeat ISIS now, not a decade from now. Our current policy of conducting limited air strikes on specific ISIS

targets is not working. ISIS has continued to gain territory, increase access to resources, incite global terrorism and kill, maim and rape thousands of defenseless civilians.

Failure to develop and implement a strategy to defeat ISIS and win this war will lead to even more instability in the region, while allowing ISIS to continue to spread its radical ideology across the globe. A credible strategy must include our regional allies who have an indisputable stake in stabilizing the region. But make no mistake, U.S. leadership is critical and our failure to push for a comprehensive strategy to confront and destroy ISIS once and for all will only make the mission more difficult and costly down the road.

Sincerely,



Matt Salmon
Member of Congress