

Press Releases

March 27, 2007

Senator Jim Webb Introduces Iran Amendment

The following is the floor statement of Senator Jim Webb upon introduction of his Iran amendment to the Iraq supplemental bill. Text of the amendment is available upon request.

Madam President, I've been on the floor on a number of occasions to discuss the amendment which I'm introducing today. I introduced it on March the 5th as S. 759, which is a bill to prohibit the use of military funds for military operations in Iran without the consent of the Congress.

I'm offering the legislation today as an amendment to the fiscal 2007 emergency supplemental appropriations bill with the support of the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee. This bill has received a good bit of discussion and also a good bit of correspondence from various citizens' groups that have gone to members' offices.

I won't take a great deal of time in terms of going through a lot of the debate about it. I would like to say at the outset that I've taken great care in the preparation of this bill to ensure that it will not in any way prevent our military forces from carrying out their tactical responsibilities in places such as Iraq and in other areas that are on the coastlines and borderlines of Iran. But I would like to emphasize that in my view, this amendment is essential to revitalizing the constitution health of our governmental process.

The purpose of this legislation is to restore a proper balance between the executive and legislative branches when it comes to the commencement of war and any general attack on Iran would be beyond cavil the commencement of a new war in a region that is already enduring two costly and debilitating wars. If this action is to be taken, it should be done only with the full and considered consent of the Congress. At the same time, the legislation allows American forces to directly respond to attacks or possible attacks that might be initiated from Iran as well as those that might be begun elsewhere and then carry over into Iranian territory.

Specifically, the amendment requires that the President seek congressional authorization prior to commencing any broad military action in Iran and it allows the following exceptions: First, military operations or activities that would directly repel an attack launched from within the territory of Iran. Second, those activities that would directly thwart an imminent attack that would be launched from Iran. Third, military operations or activities that would be in hot pursuit of forces engaged outside the territory of Iran who thereafter would enter Iran. And finally, those intelligence collection activities that have been properly noticed to the appropriate committees of Congress.

The major function of the amendment, again, is to restore the constitutional balance. No administration should have the power to commence unprovoked military activities against Iran or any other nation with the approval of the Congress.

But the issue of the day is Iran. I am offering this amendment partly due to my concern over President Bush's signing statement that accompanied the 2002 Congressional Resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq. That amendment, if you read it carefully, indicates that this Administration believes it possesses the broadest imaginable authority to commence military action without the consent of the Congress. And it should not be left unanswered by this body.

This amendment, again, will not take any military operations off the table - any options off the table - it will not tie the hands of this Administration if our military forces are actually attacked from Iranian soil or territorial waters or by forces that retreat into Iranian territory. Madam President, this is responsible legislation and I urge my colleagues to support it. Thank you, and I yield the floor.

[Editor's Note: This press release was copied without change
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on April 8, 2007, and saved without change as a PDF document]