

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0533

November 13, 2017

The Honorable Ed Royce
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Royce:

Thank you for your leadership. As you know, there have been a number of significant recent developments in the Middle East, from the mass arrest of Saudi elite to the sudden resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri. These events point to heightened regional tensions and a more aggressive approach by Saudi leadership with potentially serious implications for U.S. interests. Notably, this new approach also appears to have the endorsement of President Trump. I request that you call the administration to testify before our committee on these recent developments in the region and U.S. strategy to address them.

On November 4, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman ordered the mass arrest of dozens of Saudi elite, including 11 members of the royal family, under the guise of an anti-graft purge. The same day, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri unexpectedly announced his resignation during a visit to Riyadh, citing systemic Iranian interference in Lebanon. Reports quickly circulated that Mr. Hariri was pressured to resign by Saudi interlocutors.

Curiously, both of these events occurred only a week after an unannounced visit by White House Senior Adviser Jared Kushner and Deputy National Security Adviser Dina Powell to Saudi Arabia. Following the events, the Trump administration's official response came directly from President Trump, who tweeted, "I have great confidence in King Salman and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, they know exactly what they are doing...."

Within hours of these events, Saudi Arabia intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile launched from Houthi rebels in Yemen. Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir characterized the attack as an "act of war" by Iran, the latest development in a years-long war in Yemen. Meanwhile, a Saudi-led coalition is also engaged in diplomatic struggle with Qatar over ties to Iran and extremist groups, with no signs of a strategy to end this conflict.

All of these events share the common thread of a more aggressive regional approach by Saudi Arabia, reportedly orchestrated by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and heightened tensions between Saudi Arabia and its neighbors that could quickly spiral into more direct conflict. These dynamics have potentially serious implications for U.S. interests and demand our

committee's attention. The peculiar response by this administration, which can only be described as an unqualified endorsement of the new Saudi approach, only further underscores the need for public scrutiny and Congressional oversight.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to working with you and our committee to address it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ted W. Lieu". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

CC:
The Honorable Eliot Engel
Ranking Member
House Committee on Foreign Affairs