

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

September 29, 2015

General Joseph Dunford
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
9999 Joint Staff Pentagon
Washington, DC 20318

Dear General Dunford:

Congratulations on assuming your position as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and thank you for your distinguished service to our nation. I am writing regarding U.S. involvement in the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition (“Coalition”) airstrikes in Yemen, which according to recent reports has led to thousands of civilian casualties. I have serious questions about the Coalition’s operational conduct, the U.S.’s involvement with the Coalition, and the U.S. national security interests driving our actions in Yemen.

Multiple media sources report that the six months of Coalition airstrikes—with the apparent help of U.S. refueling, logistical assistance, intelligence and weapons—have caused mass civilian casualties. The *Huffington Post* reports that, “six-months into a Saudi-led airstrike campaign in Yemen, nearly 30,000 people have been killed or injured.”¹ According to the *New York Times*, some Coalition bombs “have fallen so far from any military target ... that human rights groups say such airstrikes amount to war crimes.”² In a recent report, Human rights group Amnesty International concluded that, “All the parties involved in the conflict have displayed a flagrant disregard for civilian lives and fundamental principles of international humanitarian law” and that the Coalition has engaged in “unlawful airstrikes which failed to distinguish between military targets and civilian objects ...”³

If these reports are true, then I respectfully request that the U.S. cease aiding Coalition airstrikes in Yemen until the Coalition demonstrates that they will institute proper safeguards to prevent civilian deaths.

Having served on active duty in the U.S. Air Force, and as a graduate of Air War College, I understand that in the fog of war no battle plan will be executed perfectly. The apparent multiple and indiscriminate airstrikes on civilian targets in Yemen, however, seem to suggest that either the Coalition is grossly negligent in its targeting or is intentionally targeting innocent civilians.

¹ Alfred, Charlotte. “Explosions Hurt More Civilians in Yemen Than in Syria This Year,” *Huffington Post*, 25 Sept. 2015; *see also* “Death toll from air strike on Yemen wedding party rises above 130: medics,” *Reuters*, 29 Sept. 2015.

² Fahim, Kareem. “Airstrikes Take Toll on Civilians in Yemen War,” *New York Times*, 12 Sept. 2015.

³ “Nowhere Safe for Civilians: Airstrikes and Ground Attacks in Yemen,” *Amnesty International*, 17 Aug. 2015; *see also* Al-Alayaa, Zaid and King, Laura. “Airstrikes Hit Key Yemen Port; Rights Group Condemns Civilian Casualties,” *Los Angeles Times*, 18 Aug 2015.

I respectfully request a written response, or a briefing, to answer the following questions within 30 days of receipt of this letter:

1. How many civilians does the Department of Defense (DoD) estimate have died as a result of Coalition airstrikes in Yemen?
2. Does DoD believe civilians in Yemen were intentionally targeted by the Coalition? Does the DoD have any information that would tend to show Yemeni civilians were intentionally targeted by Coalition airstrikes?
3. Does DoD believe the Coalition has the capability and training to bomb Yemen without indiscriminately killing civilians?
4. What are the general types of assistance that the U.S. provides to the Coalition?
5. How much money has the U.S. expended in assisting the Coalition?
6. Have any U.S. personnel died in assisting the Coalition?
7. What does DoD believe is the vital U.S. national security interest in helping the Coalition bomb in Yemen?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



TED W. LIEU
Member of Congress
House Oversight & Government Reform Committee
Subcommittee on National Security