

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 13, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Esper:

We are writing in support of maintaining strong U.S. support to the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

In an unpredictable region such as the Middle East, the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty represents an anchor of stability. It has helped to prevent war between two former adversaries for more than four decades, sparing generations of soldiers on both sides the bloodshed of the previous era.

The MFO has been vital to the peace treaty's durability. Since its establishment in 1981, the MFO has supervised the implementation of the security provisions of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and employed best efforts to prevent any violation of its terms. While the current Egyptian and Israeli governments both recognize the importance of the peace treaty and have every interest in sustaining it, the MFO's oversight and mediation ensures that disagreements between the two sides are resolved diplomatically and discreetly.

The MFO's credibility to both the Egyptian and Israeli governments depends, in large part, on America's continued leadership role in the MFO, including the U.S. military men and women who are currently deployed to the Sinai Peninsula. The U.S. force contribution to the MFO is also critical to encouraging twelve other U.S. partners to contribute their own troops to the organization. Today, those other countries' contributions represent more than 60 percent of the MFO's overall force.

For these reasons, it would be a grave mistake if the U.S. withdrew its forces from the MFO. While resourcing the National Defense Strategy (NDS) means reexamining aspects of U.S. force posture in the Middle East, the U.S. should maintain adequate support for an

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organization that has bolstered regional stability through its peacekeeping role. Failing to do so could result in a less stable Middle East and ultimately make it more difficult to implement the NDS.

We urge you to affirm American support for, and commitment to, the MFO.

Sincerely,



James E. Risch
Chairman
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations



Robert Menendez
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations



Eliot L. Engel
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs



Michael T. McCaul
Ranking Member
House Committee on Foreign Affairs



James M. Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services



Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services



Adam Smith
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services




Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services

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Lindsey Graham
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs



Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations



Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations



Harold Rogers
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs