

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 24, 2015

The Honorable Ashton Carter  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Carter,

We write to you regarding our concern about the Administration's plans to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). As you know, the Senate Armed Services Committee recently held a hearing on this topic.

We appreciate General Austin's frank assessment that efforts to train moderate Syrian fighters "won't reach the goal that we had initially established," but the troubling state of the program calls into question its role in our counter-ISIL operations.

While we support a strategy that makes use of local partners on the ground, it seems clear that we cannot expect this effort, as currently constructed, to produce a sufficient number of trained fighters to field a force capable of achieving the President's goal of degrading and destroying ISIL.

Undersecretary Wormuth's testimony indicated that the Department of Defense was currently reviewing changes to the Administration's strategy, and several news sources have reported a variety of adjustments are apparently under consideration. We fully support an expeditious review of the current approach, and ask that you provide us a briefing on the results of the deliberations, including a description of changes that will be made to the Syria train-and-equip program.

Additionally, we request that this briefing include an explanation of the Department of Defense's determination that the President's Article II power provides the necessary authority for U.S. forces to engage Bashar al Assad's forces in support of Syrian rebels.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Deb Fischer  
United States Senator



Claire McCaskill  
United States Senator