United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 9, 2026

Dear Colleagues:

As it stands, the Senate FY27 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) includes a massive, unnecessary funding authorization increase for the Pentagon budget, as well as provisions that *mandate* enhanced defense and intelligence cooperation with the government of Israel at a time when the Netanyahu coalition continues to undermine U.S. interests and values. As the full Senate prepares to debate the NDAA, we urge our colleagues to oppose any motion to proceed until we secure amendment votes on these issues or they are addressed by other means.

The current draft of the FY27 Senate NDAA would authorize a $1.15 trillion national defense budget, a 29 percent increase from the FY26 enacted level. The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) passed the NDAA out of committee, but it did so on a divided vote of 18-9, demonstrating significant and unprecedented Democratic opposition. If this bill passes as written, it would provide an enormous increase in military spending during the Trump Administration's illegal war of choice in the Middle East and while our constituents continue to struggle with an affordability crisis. And as the administration seeks to cut domestic programs that would ameliorate this crisis, this bill would instead authorize funds for Trump's "Golden Dome," which the Congressional Budget Office found could cost $1.2 trillion over 20 years, as well as other costly projects. On top of that, the Pentagon has failed eight audits in a row, the last one as recently as December 2025. We would not tolerate such a lack of transparency and good governance with any other federal agency, yet this bill rewards those failings instead of rectifying them.

This bill also includes a provision that would more deeply entrench U.S.-Israel defense cooperation. The provision (Sec. 1217) *mandates* the creation of a "United States-Israel Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative," which would require the expansion and acceleration of the U.S.-Israel defense relationship, including technology sharing, co-production of weapons systems, and bilateral research and development across multiple domains of warfare such as biotechnology, autonomous systems, AI, cyberwarfare, and others.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has openly stated that such an initiative was his idea. In a letter to Rep. Stutzman, who led a resolution calling for an effort similar to Section 1217, Prime Minister Netanyahu states, "I was glad to receive your proposed Congressional resolution ***endorsing my plan*** to shift the framework of the US-Israel defense cooperation from aid to partnership."

Among other priorities, this initiative would expand coproduction agreements with Israel beyond missile defense to include sensitive domain areas like AI and autonomous systems. These agreements threaten U.S. national security interests by handing the Netanyahu government leverage over American weapons systems and military technology. This is not hypothetical. The Netanyahu government has already leveraged its existing coproduction agreement with the United States on missile defense to block American Iron Dome batteries from reaching Ukraine - directly against U.S. national security interests

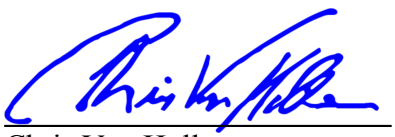
In April 2026, 40 members of our caucus voted against sending certain weapons to Israel due to deep concerns with the Netanyahu government's actions, including the devastation in Gaza, the war in Iran and Lebanon, and rampant settler violence on the West Bank. Forty votes against arms sales reflects a clear and growing recognition that the Netanyahu government's actions do not serve U.S. interests. Congress should not mandate deeper defense cooperation with a government actively undermining U.S. interests in real time.

In addition, while not yet incorporated into the bill, the FY27 Intelligence Authorization Act is typically added to the NDAA via a floor amendment before passage in the Senate. As passed by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, that bill includes a provision (Sec. 622) championed by Sen. Cotton that *mandates* the executive branch "expand and enhance intelligence sharing with the Government of Israel," and also states that intelligence sharing with Israel "shall not be suspended, reduced, or otherwise materially limited." The intent of this provision is clear: to block the President from limiting our intelligence sharing with Israel. Imposing such a constraint on the President's ability to protect America's vital intelligence is reckless at any time, but particularly now, when according to public reports, the Trump Administration recently raised the counterintelligence threat level from Israel to the highest level. And recently, U.S. intelligence agencies reportedly warned the Trump Administration that Prime Minister Netanyahu is likely to undermine efforts to reach a lasting peace deal with Iran in order to ensure his own political survival.

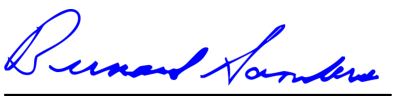
Both of these provisions would *require* that the United States deepen our defense and intelligence relationship with Israel. President Trump, at his own discretion, could choose to enter new agreements with Israel under existing law. As Senate Democrats, we should not be providing votes compelling him to deepen the U.S. relationship with Netanyahu's extremist government. Today, the Netanyahu government is undermining efforts to end the wars in Iran and Lebanon, violating the 20-Point Gaza Peace Plan, and facilitating rampant settler violence on the West Bank. Mandating enhanced cooperation amidst all these concerns does not serve our interests or reflect American values. Nor does it serve our interests to authorize a massive increase in the Pentagon's budget for an administration that is more focused on starting reckless and illegal wars than on serving the needs of the American people.

We urge our colleagues to oppose the motion to proceed unless and until we are able to properly debate these issues on the Senate floor.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Peter Welch
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator