

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

March 8, 2024

President Biden:

We are gravely concerned about the Administration's plan to use U.S. military forces to build a temporary dock in Gaza through which to unload humanitarian aid.

During your State of the Union speech on March 7, 2024, you [announced](#) an emergency military operation to establish a temporary port off the coast of Gaza to allow shipments of food, water, medicine, and shelter. [According](#) to administration officials, this temporary port would be constructed from U.S. ships and then moved onto shore over the course of up to two months. The Administration argues that it will [not require](#) U.S. forces on the ground, but rather that U.S. forces will facilitate the transfer of aid from Cyprus. We cannot easily imagine a more potentially catastrophic U.S. policy towards Gaza. The risk seems immense.

We are confident that if necessary, the U.S. government could move an enormous amount of aid to Gaza. That will not, however, help more aid reach the civilian population. On a background call with the media on March 2, 2024, senior administration officials confirmed that the problem is distribution of that aid: as the administration [said](#), "The challenge has not been getting 250, 300 trucks-load of assistance physically into Gaza. The problem has been distribution, and distribution is what matters. This is a product of, if you will, commercialization of the assistance: criminal gangs are taking it, looting it, reselling it."

Your plan, of course, does not address the problem of distribution of aid. The border crossings at Kerem Shalom and Rafah are both functioning and there is [additional capability](#) to send in more aid. Israel [maintains](#) no limit on the aforementioned aid. Will the aid be left in a heap on the shore in the hopes that civilians can evade the gangs and Hamas to reach it? If you are trying to increase the amount of aid such that it becomes demonetized as a commodity, will it still comply with Israeli inspection standards? Will offsite inspections in Cyprus – or somewhere else – be equally secure?

Secondly, how will the United States military maintain security over outside shipments at that dock? Will it actively search every ship, dhow, and skiff that approaches? On January 11, 2024, two U.S. Navy SEALs were [lost](#) at sea while taking part in an operation aimed at intercepting lethal Iranian aid including missile components in dhows heading for the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen. This type of smuggled lethal aid is precisely the reason Israel is at such danger from Hamas, and why we must make every effort to ensure that additional Iranian weapons do not reach Gaza.

Lastly, this operation seems to be a vast misprioritization of U.S. military resources. It is unclear how this operation will address the six remaining US citizens among the more than 134 hostages still in the hands of Hamas. Hamas is still [designated](#) as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the State Department and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist group by the Treasury Department. If any other U.S.-designated terrorist group was holding U.S. hostages, the Administration – any administration – would not be spending its resources to provide aid to that group.

We request an in-detail briefing of the operational plan for the deployment of this dock and these ships, how the dock will be secured from air, land, and sea threats, the inspections regime that will be established at Cyprus, and your plan to ensure that the aid is not stolen by Hamas or other armed criminal gangs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Waltz", written over a horizontal line.

Mike Waltz
Member of Congress

Cc:

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