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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

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July 22, 2024

Jake Sullivan  
Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

The Iranian regime has engaged in the use and mass proliferation of loitering munitions – so-called suicide drones – by its own forces, Russia, and its terrorist proxies across the Middle East for decades. Those munitions are being used to attack U.S. servicemembers and our allies, including Israel and Ukraine, and more broadly to undermine American national security interests.

Military production of the drones is financed by funds available to the Iranian regime, including roughly 100 billion dollars that the Biden administration has allowed to flow to the Ayatollah. However, the construction of the drones is enabled by the regime's access to American components, and indeed the drones are built almost entirely from components produced by U.S. companies.<sup>1</sup> U.S. export and trade restrictions are aimed in part to prevent the acquisition of such components by rogue regimes such as Iran; their failure suggests either a lack of will or ability by the Biden administration. I write to request information and a briefing on the administration's actions and engagement with industry to end this deadly supply chain.

On January 28 the Iran-backed Islamic Resistance in Iraq attacked U.S. military base Tower 22 in Jordan with these weapons, killing three American service members and injured almost 50 total,<sup>2</sup> and on April 13 Iran launched over 170 suicide drones against Israel, which would have caused mass casualties but for unprecedented defensive cooperation with Israeli and other allies that included the intervention of U.S. Armed Forces.<sup>3</sup> These drones are also being used by Iran-controlled Houthi terrorists to launch attacks in the Red Sea and beyond.<sup>4</sup> Notoriously, since

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<sup>1</sup> "Dissecting Iranian Drones Employed by Russia in Ukraine," CONFLICT ARMAMENT RESEARCH (Nov 30, 2022); David Albright and Sarah Burkhard, "Electronics in the Shahed-136 Kamikaze Drone," INSTITUTE FOR SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY (Nov 14, 2023); "State Register of Sanctions," NATIONAL SECURITY SERVICE OF UKRAINE (Accessed Apr 10, 2024).

<sup>2</sup> "Statement from President Joe Biden on Attack on U.S. Service Members in Northeastern Jordan Near the Syria Border," THE WHITE HOUSE (Jan 28, 2024); Phil Stewart & Idrees Ali, "Exclusive: U.S. Believes Drone That Killed Soldiers Was Iranian-Made," REUTERS (Feb 1, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> Susannah George, Samuel Granados, Laris Karklis, and Nilo Tabrizy, "What Iran's attack on Israel revealed about its weapons arsenal," THE WASHINGTON POST (Apr 17, 2024); Alex Horton, Ellen Nakashima, and Samuel Oakford, "Drone in Jordan Attack that Killed U.S. Troops Likely Went Undetected," THE WASHINGTON POST (Feb 6, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> See Simon Scarr et al., "How Yemen's Houthi Rebels are Carrying Out Attacks on Red Sea Ships," REUTERS (Feb 2, 2024); Kali Robinson and Will Merrow, "Iran's Regional Armed Network," COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (Apr 15, 2024); 2024 Iran

Putin's further invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 the Russian military has used Iranian drones to halt Ukrainian advances at crucial parts of the war and has used those munitions to launch devastating attacks at Ukrainian civilians and military infrastructure.<sup>5</sup>

These drones are made almost entirely of American components, including ones cannibalized from other machines or transferred through third- or fourth-party distributors using convoluted routes to move tiny electronics.<sup>6</sup> The administration claims it is working to restrict access to such components. In December 2022, the White House reportedly launched an "expansive task force" to examine how Iran obtains the American-made components necessary for its militant drone-building. This "all hands on deck" drone task force is overseen by the National Security Council and reportedly includes the Department of Commerce as well as the Department of Defense, Department of State, Department of Justice, and the Department of the Treasury.<sup>7</sup> However, since the announcement of this task force in 2022, there has not been a single published update, report, or announcement.

The Standing Rules of the Senate provide the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation the authority to "review and study, on a comprehensive basis" all matters related to regulation of consumer products, interstate commerce, aviation and issues related to "[s]cience, engineering, and technology research and development and policy."<sup>8</sup> To better understand how these materials are transiting to Iran, I request you provide written answers to the following questions no later than August 5, 2024.

1. On what date did the White House's Drone Task Force officially launch?
2. List all agencies that are members of the Task Force.
3. Describe in detail the Task Force's activities to date.
4. How have the Drone Task Force and the respective agencies that comprise the Task Force engaged American companies whose components have been found in Iranian-made drones?
  - a. Have the Drone Task Force or the respective agencies that comprise the Task Force requested or compiled a list of manufacturers or distributors used by American companies whose products have been found in Iranian drones?

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Enabling Houthi Attacks Across the Middle East, DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (Feb 2024); "Evolution of UAVs Employed by Houthi Forces in Yemen," CONFLICT ARMAMENT RESEARCH (Feb 1, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> David Vergun, "General says Iranian drones, troops operating in Ukraine," U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (Oct 20, 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Amirhadi Anvari, "Despite Sanctions, Iran Imported \$236mn Worth Of Drone Parts In 10 Years," IRAN INTERNATIONAL (Feb 21, 2024); Kristina Partsinevelos, "The chip industry's open secret: Adversaries' military tech relies on U.S. components," CNBC (Apr 17, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Natasha Bertrand, "Exclusive: Biden Task Force investigating how US Tech ends up in Iranian attack drones used against Ukraine," CNN (Dec 21, 2022).

<sup>8</sup> S. Rules XXV(1)(f), XXVI(8)(a)(2).

- b. Please describe all outreach to specific members of the component supply chain, including companies, manufacturers, and distributors.
5. Has the Task Force communicated with the governments of the countries or territories through which drone components appear to be transshipped before they enter Iran? If yes, please list the relevant countries or territories and describe the nature of the communications.
6. Has the Task Force provided any economic analysis identifying the cost of the components or the drones?

I request you also make appropriate staff available to brief Committee staff on the White House Drone Task Force and related matters regarding U.S.-manufactured components found in our adversaries' military technology at unclassified and classified levels. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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Ted Cruz  
Ranking Member