

\*LIVE No Bullets\*



## REPEAL OF THE AUTHORIZATIONS FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE AGAINST IRAQ

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I rise to voice my support for S. 316, a bill to repeal the authorizations for use of Military Force Against Iraq.

Sending America's sons and daughters to fight in foreign lands has serious consequences. Those who volunteer for military service, as well as their families, agree to carry things with them for their lifetimes—sometimes difficult and painful things—all at the behest of the U.S. government and on behalf of the American people.

I am grateful for and thank those servicemembers who bravely conducted themselves in Iraq with honor, restraint, and in accordance with American values and ideals.

With that important preface, let me say clearly: I opposed the Iraq War. I opposed the Iraq war before I was elected to Congress, while I was a Member of the House of Representatives, and I oppose it today.

I believe that by any objective measure, the 2002 U.S. invasion of Iraq was among the greatest foreign policy disasters in my lifetime. Not only did it cause death and immense suffering of thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, but it also ignited a series of regional tensions and tertiary conflicts that have carried on for decades.

Both the Gulf War and the 2002 invasion of Iraq required legal authorities. The Iraq authorizations of military force were legally necessary and largely supported at the time.

However, very practically, we no longer need an authorization for use of military force against a country we now regard as a partner and to which we provide hundreds of millions of dollars in economic and military aid. This bill recognizes the positive evolution of our relations with the Government of Iraq. We will continue to work with our Iraqi partners to limit our military presence and narrowly define the actions our servicemembers are authorized to take. It is also important to note that this resolution will have no impact whatsoever on current U.S. military operations.

Some opponents of this bill have suggested that repealing the authorizations for use of force will embolden our adversaries or exhibit America's weakness. To the contrary, whether one supported or opposed the invasions of Iraq 31 and 20 years ago, it is important to repeal these antiquated relics of history.

As national security threats arise, they should be properly addressed. The President can request congressional authorization for the use of military force with properly debated justifications, after which, Members of Congress will vote their conscience and America's will. This bill does nothing to restrict presidential powers of this nor future presidents. America will defend herself—always. However, it is critical that America's use of force be thoughtful and deliberate, informed by accurate intelligence, and used only when necessary to preserve and protect our vital national security interests.

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Over the years, I have consistently voted to repeal the Iraq authorizations for use of military force. I commend my colleagues, Senators Kaine and Young, for their tenacity and determination to see these repeals through. I also strongly support a review of the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force which has been the legal basis for actions far beyond what was ever intended after the attacks of 9/11.

For the task at hand, however, I urge all Senators to support S. 316, a bill to repeal the authorizations for use of military force against Iraq.

I yield back.