

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 23, 2026

Admiral Brad Cooper
Commander
U.S. Central Command
MacDill AFB, FL 33621

Admiral Cooper,

We are troubled by President Trump's threat yesterday to bomb Iran's bridges and power plants.¹ As you know, intentionally targeting civilian infrastructure could amount to a war crime, prohibited by domestic and international law.² The mere threat of such attacks may violate the law of war.³ As members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, we are writing to clarify your commitment to ensuring forces under your command abide by these laws.

The law of war prohibits attacks against civilian objects, indiscriminate attacks, and attacks expected to cause excessive harm to civilians in relation to the direct military advantage anticipated.⁴ The law of war also prohibits threats of violence to spread terror among the civilian population.⁵

In determining that Russia had committed war crimes in Ukraine, the U.S. State Department specifically cited Russia's attacks on Ukrainian critical infrastructure.⁶ General Alexis G. Grynkeiwich, Commander of EUCOM and SACEUR, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee that such Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure, in addition to being unlawful, were strategically ineffective, noting "anytime you attack a civilian population, you usually end up finding that it just hardens their resolve."⁷

¹ Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Truth Social (July 22, 2026) (online at <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116963738416841583>).

² 18 U.S.C. § 2441(c)(1); Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War art. 147, Aug. 12, 1949, 6 U.S.T. 3516, 75 U.N.T.S. 287 [hereinafter Geneva Convention IV].

³ Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I) art. 51(2), *opened for signature* June 8, 1977, 1125 U.N.T.S. 3 [hereinafter Protocol I].

⁴ 18 U.S.C. § 2441(c)(1); Geneva Convention IV, *supra* note 2, art. 147.

⁵ Protocol I, *supra* note 3, art. 51(2); *see also* Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Law of War Manual*, § 5.2.2 (July 2023) (online at <https://media.defense.gov/2023/Jul/31/2003271432/-1/-1/0/dod-law-of-war-manual-june-2015-updated-july%202023.pdf>).

⁶ *See* Department of State, *Press Release: War Crimes by Russia's Forces in Ukraine* (Mar. 23, 2022) (online at <https://2021-2025.state.gov/war-crimes-by-russias-forces-in-ukraine/>).

⁷ Committee on Armed Services, Testimony of General Alexis G. Grynkeiwich, United States Air Force, *Hearing on the Posture of United States European Command and United States Transportation Command*, 119th Cong. (Mar. 12, 2026) (online at <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/to-receive-testimony-on-the-posture-of-united-states-european-command-and-united-states-transportation-command-in-review-of-the-defense->

Please answer the following questions by July 30, 2026:

1. Are you legally responsible for any targeting decisions by commanders and personnel under your command? Do you consider CENTCOM officials signing off on targeting packages to be legally responsible for such decisions under the law of war?
2. Are officers under your command aware that under the doctrine of command responsibility they have a duty to ensure subordinate personnel are following the law of war, a duty to investigate potential war crimes, a duty to hold accountable those who commit them, and that dereliction of such duties would likely constitute a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice?⁸
3. Will you ensure that forces under your command conduct a documented case-by-case analysis of the legality for each proposed target in Iran that could constitute civilian infrastructure, assessing whether such targets offer a concrete and direct military advantage and whether the expected harm to civilians is not excessive compared to that anticipated military advantage? And will you commit to maintaining the records of such analysis and providing them to the relevant Congressional committees, including on a classified basis, upon request?
4. Will you order an investigation of any significant civilian casualty events resulting from U.S. military actions in Iran?

The U.S. military has a reputation—earned through the hard work and sacrifices of brave men and women who serve our nation—for honorable service and for upholding very high standards under the law of war. Not only is this a reflection of American values, but it is militarily effective. Targeting civilians undermines the mission, creating even more enemies while undermining our national security and damaging the global standing of the United States.

Thank you for your service and for ensuring that CENTCOM forces uphold these values.

Respectfully,



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

[authorization-request-for-fiscal-year-2027-and-the-future-years-defense-program\).](#)

⁸ Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Law of War Manual*, § 18.23.3 (July 2023) (online at <https://media.defense.gov/2023/Jul/31/2003271432/-1/-1/0/dod-law-of-war-manual-june-2015-updated-july%202023.pdf>); 10 U.S.C. § 892.