

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

July 13, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Admiral Brad Cooper
Commander U.S. Central Command
U.S. Central Command
7115 South Boundary Boulevard
MacDill AFB, FL 33621-5101

Dear Secretary Hegseth and Admiral Cooper:

We write regarding the Department of Defense's investigation into the February 28, 2026 strike on Shajareh Tayyebbeh Elementary School for girls in Minab, Iran, which reportedly killed approximately 120 children and at least 175 people in total. If true, this incident would constitute the U.S. military's largest civilian casualty incident since 1991. The Department must promptly provide Congress with the complete and unredacted investigation, and submit a concrete plan to ensure such a tragedy does not happen again.

Recent press reporting indicates that the investigation ordered by Admiral Cooper was submitted in April but remains under review by senior DoD leadership. That reporting further indicates that investigators have identified multiple potential failures, including that an analyst noted as early as 2019 that the site appeared to have changed from a naval facility into a school, but that remark was entered into a digital intelligence tool that was not connected to the authoritative targeting database used to develop strike targets. The reporting also indicates that the site was reviewed multiple additional times in subsequent years without the targeting database being updated. Additional reporting from this week alleges that warnings were made in the system indicating the intelligence for the targets was dated, but those warnings were ignored for "expediency" even though the Administration spent weeks planning for President Trump's war of choice.

These reported issues, if accurate, raise deeply troubling questions about the integrity of U.S. target development, the adequacy of target validation and vetting procedures, the interoperability of intelligence and targeting databases, the timeliness and reliability of intelligence used for lethal targeting, and the Department's implementation of civilian harm mitigation policies. They also raise urgent questions about whether the Department has sufficient targeting personnel, training, accountability mechanisms, and technical safeguards to support large-scale conventional operations.

More than four months after the strike, and after the reported submission of the investigation in April, Congress and the American people still have not received the Department's investigation and findings. There is no justification for withholding an unclassified accounting of what happened, what went wrong, and what the Department is doing to prevent recurrence.

Accordingly, we request that the Department of Defense and U.S. Central Command take the following actions no later than July 20, 2026:

1. Promptly finalize the investigation into the February 28 strike on Shajareh Tayyebbeh Elementary School and provide Congress with the complete and unredacted investigation.
2. Provide an unclassified version of the report to Congress, suitable for public release.
3. Submit to Congress a prevention and remediation plan that identifies the specific corrective actions the Department will take to ensure this does not happen again.
4. Provide a briefing to Congress on the investigation and all steps being taken to ensure errors of this kind do not happen again.

The United States military has a legal and moral obligation to take all feasible precautions to prevent civilian harm. When a U.S. strike kills civilians, the Department owes Congress, the American people, and the victims' families a clear accounting of what happened and a credible plan to prevent future failures.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



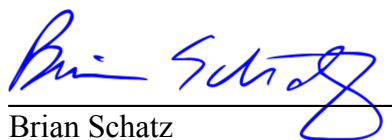
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



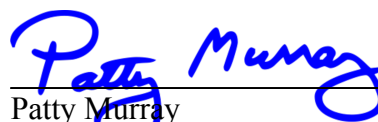
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



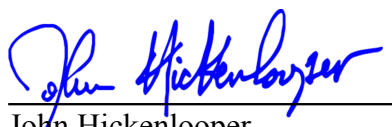
Andy Kim
United States Senator



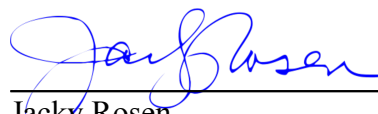
Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



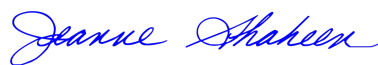
John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



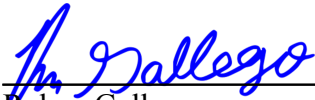
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



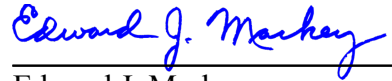
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



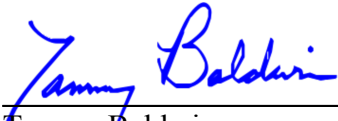
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



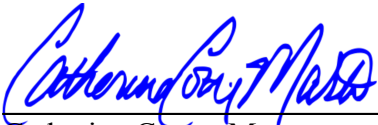
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



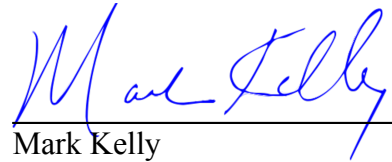
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



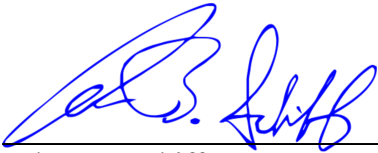
Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator