

**An Open Letter to Members of the U.S. Senate:
Oppose the Confirmation of Chuck Hagel for Secretary of Defense**

Dear U.S. Senators,

We respectfully call on the members of the United States Senate to vote against Chuck Hagel's confirmation as Secretary of Defense. We honor and appreciate Mr. Hagel's service to our nation, both as an enlisted soldier and in public office. However, we are deeply concerned by Mr. Hagel's record and views on a broad range of national security issues, and we fear that his confirmation as defense secretary would send a dangerous signal to our enemies about America's willingness to do what is necessary to defend ourselves and our allies.

The next defense secretary must strengthen our nation's defenses and work to avert the threat of deep cuts to defense due to sequestration, which, according to outgoing Secretary Leon Panetta, would "hollow the force and devastate our national security." Unfortunately, Mr. Hagel, when asked about sequestration, replied that he supports significant cuts to defense. He also repeatedly opposed robust deployment of missile defense systems that could guard against danger from adversaries with advancing missile programs.

The secretary of defense must also sustain and modernize America's nuclear arsenal in order to deter growing threats. But Mr. Hagel has allied himself with those out of the mainstream who support unilateral nuclear disarmament and seek to do away with America's intercontinental ballistic missile force, our strongest deterrent, which would deny our nation the ability to immediately respond to a nuclear attack.

The next Pentagon chief will also take a leading role in cooperating on security with close U.S. allies and addressing the growing threats from rogue regimes that sponsor terrorism and pursue weapons of mass destruction. Mr. Hagel is not the right person for these vital responsibilities. He has repeatedly criticized our close ally Israel and wrongly blamed Israel for the lack of progress in the peace process and the 2006 war in Lebanon.

As a U.S. Senator, he repeatedly refused to sign bipartisan letters of support for Israel. In 2000, he refused to sign a letter of support to Israel, which 96 of his colleagues signed and in 1999 was the only U.S. Senator not to sign a letter condemning anti-Semitism in Russia.

He voted against legislation sanctioning Iran and designating its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization, and did not sign a letter urging the European Union to designate Hezbollah, a violent Iranian proxy responsible for the deaths of Americans and Israelis, as a terrorist organization. Contrary to the policy of the Obama Administration and its predecessors, Mr. Hagel has also supported direct U.S. engagement with Hamas, another Iranian-sponsored terrorist group.

Preventing the nightmare of a nuclear Iran from becoming reality is among the greatest challenges faced by the U.S. President Obama and his administration have repeatedly affirmed their determination to stop Iran from having a nuclear weapon and to keep all options on the table in that regard, including a military option. Unfortunately, Mr. Hagel has opposed the use of force against Iran's nuclear program. Mr. Hagel's words and deeds send the wrong message about U.S. policy and resolve to our enemies and allies alike.

We respect the President's constitutional prerogative to nominate senior Executive Branch officials. Unfortunately, in this case, the consequences of deference are too high, and we are left with no other choice. We ask senators to vote against Mr. Hagel's nomination.

Sincerely,

Frank Gaffney
Founder & President
Center for Security Policy

Morton Klein
President
Zionist Organization of America

Sarah Stern
Founder & President
Endowment for Middle East Truth

Ken Timmerman
President
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