



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on June 28, 2013

## House and Senate Bills Would Block Military Aid to Syria

As the Obama administration rushes to [deploy the U.S. military in Egypt](#) in defiance of [Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution](#), Representative Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) and Senator Tom Udall (D-N.M.) have offered bills that would block the pipeline of U.S. military aid flowing to al-Qaeda in Syria.



Joined by Republican Representatives Justin Amash (Mich.), Walter Jones (N.C.), Ted Yoho (Fla.), Phil Roe (Tenn.), Mo Brooks (Ala.), Joe Pitts (Penn.), Mark Meadows (N.C.), Scott DesJarlais (Tenn.), and Louie Gohmert (Texas), [Representative Massie introduced H.R. 2507](#), a measure that points out the president's violation of the separation of powers — particularly regarding the authority to declare war — in the supplying of military arms and funds to Syrian forces opposing the al-Assad government.

As [Massie explained](#) in a statement announcing the bill:

Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution gives Congress — not the President — the power to declare war. But the President recently announced his intention to send arms to the rebels in Syria fighting President Bashar al-Assad's regime. H.R. 2507, the War Powers Protection Act of 2013, prohibits any military assistance to Syrian opposition forces unless Congress issues a formal declaration of war pursuant to Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution.

Since our national security interests in Syria are unclear, we risk giving money and military assistance to our enemies. Additionally, all military action must be authorized by Congress. The American people deserve open debate by their elected officials.

Justin Amash, one of the bill's cosponsors, echoed Massie's understanding of the Constitution and the power to declare war:

The Constitution empowers Congress — and only Congress — to declare war. Congress has not declared war against Syria or otherwise authorized force in that country, yet the President unilaterally has decided to arm the Syrian rebels. His action is unconstitutional and must be stopped.

Massie's bill is particularly timely given President Obama's announcement that he will authorize the shipment of U.S. military material to "rebels" in Syria.

Another of the bill's cosponsors recognizes a departure from the principles followed by our Founding Fathers and worries that such deviations will have predictable results. "We should follow the advice of our Founders and pursue honest and open trade with all nations, while avoiding entanglement in their



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conflicts. By arming Syria, we are escalating a problem that is not our fight,” Representative Ted Yoho (R-Fla.) told *The New American*. “When we interfered in the war between Iraq and Iran, we ended up helping create the Saddam Hussein regime that we then spent precious American blood and treasure to topple. When we chose Afghanistan over Russia, we started a process that ended up creating al-Qaeda,” explained Yoho.

There is the rub.

As part of the [National Defense Authorization Act of 2012](#), Congress declared that anyone suspected of aiding or supporting al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and associated forces was subject to indefinite detention. Apparently, this law applies to journalists, but not to members of Congress.

If the law did apply to the lawmakers, there would be hundreds of members of Congress voting in absentia from federal prisons.

The effort to enforce the Constitution’s separation of powers and prevent the president from unilaterally sending troops and military aid to foreign forces is underway on the Senate side, as well.

Less than a week before Massie offered his bill, Senators Tom Udall (D-N.M.), Mike Lee (R-Utah), Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), and Rand Paul (R-Ky.) introduced a bipartisan measure that would prohibit the president from using any funds on activities that would escalate U.S. involvement in the Syrian civil war.

Specifically, the bill would ban the Department of Defense, the CIA, and all other intelligence agencies from “funding any military, paramilitary or covert operations in Syria.”

According to [a press release issued by one of the bill’s cosponsors, Senator Rand Paul](#):

All four Senators have spoken out strongly in opposition to President Obama’s decision to arm rebel groups in Syria. Udall, Murphy and Paul, all members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, cast the lone votes in Committee against authorizing the President to arm and train rebels fighting the forces of President Bashar al-Assad in an ongoing civil war.

Senator Udall explained his opposition to the president’s arming of Syrian rebels:

I am deeply disturbed by the current situation in Syria and atrocities committed by President Assad’s regime and other militant groups inside Syria. The ongoing humanitarian tragedy deserves the attention of the international community.

But there are too many questions about how the president’s decision to arm the Syrian rebels will be handled, and unfortunately many of those answers are being kept secret. We don’t know where the money is coming from, who the arms are going to, and whether the arms are going to individuals who have the capabilities to maintain a chain of custody of those weapons. This would not be acceptable in any standard sale of weapons to another government and should definitely not be acceptable for sales to rebel groups we know little about.

We need to place a check on the President’s unilateral decision to arm the rebels, while still preserving humanitarian aid and assistance to the Syrian people, and that is why I’m introducing this bill.

Bottom line: We should not get involved in another civil war in the Middle East without a clear national security interest.

Senator Mike Lee worries that these arms will flow directly into the hands of those elements of the



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Syrian opposition that are associated with al-Qaeda:

The conflict in Syria has been going on for over two years, yet there are many questions surrounding the composition and goals of Syrian opposition groups and the interests of U.S. national security that need answers. Any military involvement in Syria, including the arming of Syrian rebels, needs to be authorized through Congress, where concerns can be publicly debated and the American people can have a say. We have to ensure that we are not arming extremist groups who seek to cause chaos in the region and harm the United States and our allies. The long-term objectives of increased involvement in Syria are vague, as are the necessary commitments and costs. The United States cannot be involved in more nation building in the Middle East.

Senator Paul echoed his colleagues' concerns.

The president's unilateral decision to arm Syrian rebels is incredibly disturbing, considering what little we know about whom we are arming. Engaging in yet another conflict in the Middle East with no vote or Congressional oversight compounds the severity of this situation. The American people deserve real deliberation by their elected officials before we send arms to a region rife with extremists who seek to threaten the U.S. and her allies.

In an exclusive interview with *The New American* in May, Senator Paul pointed out the irony in the fact that the original Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) enacted after September 11, 2001 called for finding and destroying al-Qaeda, while the legislation passed on May 21 by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee would arm known associates of that very organization. "These people [Syrian rebels] will say they love America knowing that that's how to get weapons. They lie to us and then shoot us in the back," Paul explained.

Representative Massie's bill is currently pending before the House Foreign Affairs, Armed Services, and Intelligence committees for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

Senator Udall's legislation — the [Protecting Americans From the Proliferation of Weapons to Terrorists Act of 2013](#) — is awaiting consideration by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

Americans interested in restoring the balance and the separation of power as set forth in the Constitution, should contact their representatives and senators and encourage them to vote in favor of the Massie or Udall bills.

Photo is of cutaway hand grenades

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