

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 31, 2024

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We urge you to maximize your efforts to prevent illicit trade in Iranian oil by implementing and enforcing sanctions on ships, ports, and refineries that deal in Iranian oil. Our bipartisan *Stop Harboring Iranian Petroleum Act*, or *SHIP Act*, the *End Iranian Terrorism Act*, and other legislative proposals would deny Iran the financial resources it employs to attack U.S. forces and U.S. allies throughout the Middle East. We urge you to use all available authorities to proactively implement these sanctions while Congress considers enacting legislation.

The barbaric October 7, 2023 attack on Israel was a stark reminder of the threats Iranian-backed terrorist groups pose to both Israelis and Americans, as well as the dangers inherent to appeasing the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran directly enabled the October 7 attacks by funding, training, and equipping Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad. Moreover, Iranian funding has supported proxies such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Shia militias in Iraq and Syria, and the Houthis in Yemen.

In response to the October 7 attacks, and Iran's subsequent mobilization of its terrorist proxy forces across the region, we urge your administration to take immediate action to deny the regime in Iran additional financial resources that it can use to continue supporting terrorism, destabilizing the Middle East, and ultimately harming Americans. These efforts should start by focusing on Iran's expanding and lucrative illicit oil trade, which has increased over the last few years. The sanctions detailed in the *SHIP* and *End IT Acts* would help to strengthen existing sanctions, focusing on ships, ports, and refineries that permit transactions involving Iranian oil products.

Iran is now exporting on average more than 1.4 million barrels of crude oil per day, two-thirds of which ends up in the People's Republic of China. From February 2021 to October 2023, the regime has taken in at least \$88 billion from these illicit oil exports. Iran is deriving significant economic benefits from pervasive sanctions evasion, with Iran's economy growing by four percent annually and net foreign currency reserves also increasing by 45 percent from 2021 to 2023.

Surging oil exports and increasing sanctions evasions enable Iran to increase its financial and material support for Hamas and other terrorist proxies, including Hezbollah, that threaten Israel. There is well-documented evidence that Iranian weapons were used by Hamas fighters in the October 7 attack. Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of State assesses that Iran also provides Hezbollah with hundreds of millions of dollars each year, with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant estimating annual Iranian support for Hezbollah exceeds \$700 million.

Strengthening sanctions on Iranian oil is especially critical in light of the ongoing attacks on U.S. forces across the Middle East by Iranian-backed groups. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, there have been more than 140 attacks on U.S. troops in the region since October 7, 2023, most recently resulting in the tragic deaths of three U.S. servicemembers and dozens of injuries this past weekend. These attacks are directly enabled by the financial and military support Iran provides to militias and other groups in Iraq and Syria. Additionally, since October 7, Iranian-backed Houthis have launched missiles and suicide drones at Israeli civilians from Yemen, shot down a U.S. MQ-9 Reaper surveillance drone over international waters, and hijacked cargo ships. The Houthis, enabled by the Iranian regime, have crippled the free flow of commerce in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

In the wake of the October 7 terror attacks and subsequent attacks by Iran-backed proxies on U.S. forces in the Middle East, we urge you to work harder to stop Iran's funneling of lucrative oil exports to finance terror. These exports provide a crucial lifeline to sustain and expand Iran's sponsorship of terrorist groups whose objective is to harm U.S. interests in the Middle East and to destroy our ally, Israel.

Accordingly, we call on you to immediately take additional action to stop Iran's illicit oil trade. Specifically, we urge you to sanction ships transporting Iranian petroleum products as well as the foreign ports and refineries that knowingly accept those products.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Margaret Hassan
U.S. Senator



James E. Risch
U.S. Senator



Jacky Rosen
U.S. Senator




Mike Crapo
U.S. Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
U.S. Senator



Bill Hagerty
U.S. Senator




John Fetterman
U.S. Senator


Shelley Moore Capito
U.S. Senator


Catherine Cortez Masto
U.S. Senator


Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senator


Marsha Blackburn
U.S. Senator


Rick Scott
U.S. Senator


Katie Boyd Britt
U.S. Senator


Deb Fischer
U.S. Senator


Ted Budd
U.S. Senator


John Cornyn
U.S. Senator


Pete Ricketts
U.S. Senator