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U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

January 16, 2020

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The Honorable Mark T. Esper
 Secretary of Defense
 1000 Defense Pentagon
 Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Esper:

We are concerned about recent reports of a potential reduction of significant American forces from West Africa.¹ We appreciate the intent behind a comprehensive review to determine the force posture necessary to ready and deploy our military as efficiently as possible. At the same time, we believe consideration of a contraction in posture in Africa must carefully weigh the potential risk to our counterterrorism mission and to undermining the conditions that U.S. military presence supports for regional stability and countering our global competitors' efforts to expand their influence.

Recent attacks across the African continent demonstrate that the threat of violent extremism and terrorism persists. The U.S. presence in Africa deters the extremist threat, supports our African partners' fight against terrorism, and fosters partnerships in support of the National Defense Strategy, effectively countering Russian and Chinese efforts to expand their influence. Our investment in Africa is minimal, yet our partnerships yield outsized results. Our competitors are actively investing in Africa to expand their influence and gain advantages against the United States. Further, a reduction of forces would not only impact our African and European security partners, but also the complementary work of other U.S. departments and agencies. The security relationships with African countries benefits development and allows for stability.

We urge you to consider carefully the adverse implications of reducing our force posture in Africa. A decrease in our investment now may result in the need for the United States to re-

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/24/world/africa/esper-troops-africa-china.html>



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invest at many more times the cost down the road. The U.S. presence is a critical component in our partners' fight against terrorism that cannot be achieved from afar.

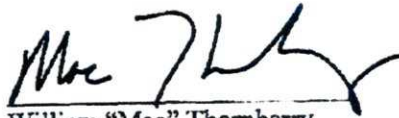
We respectfully request your consideration of these factors as you conduct your review and we ask for a continued dialogue regarding our force posture in Africa. We look forward to continuing to work together to advance the national security objectives of the United States and our partners and allies.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



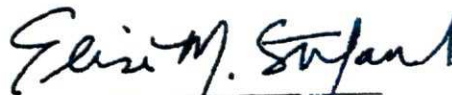
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