

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 30, 2017

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310-1000

Dear Secretary Mattis:

We write to express our concerns with President Trump's recent Executive Order that bars individuals from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Libya and Yemen from entering the United States and temporarily shuts the U.S. Refugee Assistance Program. Given your strong support for programs that offer refuge to vetted Iraqis and Afghans whose lives are in danger because of the critical assistance they provide to our soldiers and diplomats, we want to raise one specific example of the danger the Executive Order poses to our national security.


As you know, the President's Executive Order prevents Iraqis who provided essential support to the U.S. mission in their country and face threats as a result from entering the United States. This situation is unacceptable, and we fear the United States will pay significant moral and strategic costs if it continues, particularly in terms of our ability to obtain necessary local support for U.S. military missions abroad. As such, we respectfully request that you encourage the President to immediately ensure that properly vetted Iraqis who supported the U.S. mission in their country can continue to enter the U.S.

As you know, the Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program and the Priority-2 Direct Access Program for Iraqi refugees have issued thousands of visas to vetted Iraqi nationals who supported the U.S. in Iraq. A related SIV program is available to Afghans who have supported the U.S. mission in their country. You have described how you have written letters of support for Iraqis who served alongside our servicemembers. You also indicated in a response to a question for the record following your nomination hearing, that "most of our units could not have accomplished their missions without the assistance, often at risk to their lives, of these courageous men and women." Finally, you pledged that you will work to ensure that these programs have sufficient visas that those who provided critical support and whose lives are threatened are not left behind.

We recognize that much of the responsibility for implementing this Executive Order falls outside of your official duties as Secretary. However, given that you understand the strategic and moral importance of standing with, and when necessary providing refuge to, those foreigners who supported our soldiers and diplomats, we urge you to intercede with the President and we support any efforts you make toward that end. Properly vetted individuals who supported the U.S. missions overseas and face threats as a result must continue to be allowed entry to the United States.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jeanne Shaheen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Thom Tillis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Thom Tillis
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable John Kelly

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Claire McCaskill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Claire McCaskill
United States Senator