

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 9, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

In the fight against the Islamic State (IS), the contributions of allies such as Jordan and the United Arab Emirates remain critical to maximizing military effectiveness and advancing shared strategic objectives. The ongoing mission support from partner nations has resulted in enhanced engagement of the enemy and continues to provide a wider range of options and resources.

To support these efforts, and better advance our own interests, there is specific weapons technology and capability that can be offered to these nations. For Jordan in particular, we are aware of the interest in unmanned aerial systems—namely, Predator XP and MQ-9 Reaper—for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. Jordan has also made a more immediate request for the use of MQ-9 Reapers that they would own and operate in their country.

To meet urgent operational requirements Jordan could utilize US Air Force owned MQ-1 assets. Under this proposal, Jordanian pilots would fly the operational missions but the assets themselves would remain under the ownership of the Air Force. Asset maintenance, launch and recovery would be the responsibility of General Atomics—the designer and manufacturer of the MQ-1. The request, if approved, would ensure Jordan is able to quickly acquire this much-needed advanced capability as it confronts IS.

While there might be a presumption to restrict the availability and use of unmanned aerial systems, there is significant risk with doing so. Jordan, for instance, has signaled its intent to purchase platforms from China should the U.S. choose to either deny the export of unarmed systems or refuse the opportunity to temporarily utilize existing Air Force assets. This would not only disrupt the potential sale and control of U.S.-built unmanned aerial systems, but also create a new market for China to export its technology and mitigate U.S. interoperability.

We ask that you expeditiously consider and approve the use of Air Force assets to engage IS. We also ask that you consider the risks associated with Jordan and other nations consulting with China on the availability of unmanned systems, especially as China attempts to expand its influence and the reach of its defense industrial base.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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