

JONI K. ERNST
IOWA

VICE CHAIRMAN,
SENATE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE

WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE
730 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
PHONE: 202-224-3254
FAX: 202-224-9369

WWW.ERNST.SENATE.GOV

United States Senate

October 12, 2022

COMMITTEES
ARMED SERVICES
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION
AND FORESTRY
ENVIRONMENT
AND PUBLIC WORKS
SMALL BUSINESS
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Mr. Jake Sullivan
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Mr. Sullivan,

I write to express disappointment and concern that the National Security Council is postponing the United States-Gulf Coordination Council (U.S-GCC) Working Group meeting on integrated air and missile defense, scheduled for October 17th. Cancelling this engagement will stymie ongoing security cooperation necessary to advance stability in the region.

Iran and its armed proxies continue to project malign influence throughout the Middle East, actions that threaten U.S. partners and continue to pose risks to the American homeland. Tehran has been responsible for hundreds of attacks against Gulf partners since 2015. In January, Houthi terrorists conducted complex drone and missile attacks against infrastructure targets in Abu Dhabi. Their capability to strike civilian targets and wreak havoc in the region and beyond continues to grow as well. Earlier this fall, the commander of Iran's Air Force boasted that the regime would complete its largest purchase of advanced fighter jets in over 30 years from Vladimir Putin's Russia. A day later, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy unveiled an advanced patrol-combat vessel armed with vertical launch missiles, extending its operational reach.

The United States must continue to convene partners, reinforce security dialogue, and develop defense concepts to counter these growing threats. Security cooperation, diplomatic engagement, commercial development, and cultural exchange between Israel and the Gulf states—bolstered by the historic Abraham Accords—continues to grow. Integrated air and missile defense in the region has been a consistent initiative by U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), with bipartisan support. Former CENTCOM Commander General Kenneth McKenzie stated earlier this year: “While it continues to be nascent at this time, we have seen a willingness of traditional regional partners to work together in exercises with the [Israel Defense Forces]. Air defense is an excellent opportunity for cooperation.” The current CENTCOM Commander, General Michael Kurilla, has identified these efforts as a “clear priority... [and] critical to defending our forces, our partners, and our interests.” Our roadmap is clear: the United States must continue to engage regional partners to counter common threats.

DES MOINES OFFICE
733 FEDERAL BUILDING
210 WALNUT STREET
DES MOINES, IA 50309
PHONE: 515-284-4574
FAX: 515-284-4937

CEDAR RAPIDS OFFICE
111 SEVENTH AVENUE SE
SUITE 480
CEDAR RAPIDS, IA 52401
PHONE: 319-365-4504
FAX: 319-365-4683

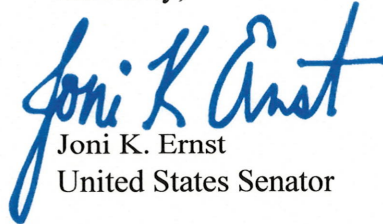
DAVENPORT OFFICE
201 WEST SECOND STREET
SUITE 806
DAVENPORT, IA 52801
PHONE: 563-322-0677
FAX: 563-322-0854

SIoux CITY OFFICE
194 FEDERAL BUILDING
320 SIXTH STREET
SIoux CITY, IA 51101
PHONE: 712-252-1550
FAX: 712-252-1638

COUNCIL BLUFFS OFFICE
2146 27TH AVENUE
SUITE 500
COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA 51501
PHONE: 712-352-1167
FAX: 712-352-0087

Disrupting this momentum delays partner capacity building, worsens regional security, and aids our adversaries. It also damages trust by conditioning regional security on resolution of broader political and energy disputes, a poor precedent. As the security partner of choice, the United States should reliably implement defense efforts and proceed with the U.S.-GCC integrated air and missile defense working group without delay.

Sincerely,



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator