

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 9, 2020

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Esper:

We write in strong opposition to your recent decision to eliminate Stars and Stripes, the only journalistically independent news source within the Department of Defense.

Since its founding 159 years ago, Stars and Stripes has provided servicemembers, Department of Defense civilians, and military families around the world with daily information on the issues that matter most to them. The experience of military service brings unique concerns that oftentimes only the journalists with Stars and Stripes have the understanding and direct access required to address. To meet the challenge of serving an audience stationed across the globe, including in combat zones, Stars and Stripes maintains thirteen international printing centers across three continents. No matter how far from home a servicemember may be stationed, they can be assured that they are still within the global reach of Stars and Stripes.

Beyond serving as a reminder of home, the journalists at Stars and Stripes provide over 1 million daily readers with unfiltered news and perspective free of institutional bias. Generations of military and civilian leaders have found that journalistic independence to be fundamental and fought to preserve it when misguided officials sought to impose restrictions. For those that swore an oath to defend and uphold the rights enshrined in the Constitution, Stars and Stripes embodies the American right to freedom of speech and free press. The existence of the paper within the Department of Defense demonstrates the deep commitment to not only protect those rights but live them.

We are pleased that the President has since committed to fully funding Stars and Stripes, though we note that there has been no official confirmation of this decision and that the President's fiscal year 2021 budget eliminated funding altogether. So that there is no further misunderstanding, we want to make it clear that we stand with the dedicated journalists at Stars

and Stripes that have devoted their lives to providing unbiased news, and with the millions of Armed Forces members who benefit from their work. Any ill-fated attempts to undermine their mission or censor their work would meet staunch Congressional opposition and would assuredly be defeated.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your service to our servicemembers and their families.

Sincerely,



JASON CROW
Member of Congress



ADAM B. SCHIFF
Member of Congress



RUBEN GALLEGO
Member of Congress



ELAINE G. LURIA
Member of Congress

/s/

ANDRÉ CARSON
Member of Congress

/s/

JAMIE RASKIN
Member of Congress



LORI TRAHAN
Member of Congress



ABIGAIL D. SPANBERGER
Member of Congress



SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress



JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress