

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 25, 2018

The Honorable James N. Mattis
Secretary
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write today to highlight an important provision that was included in the Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA, Public Law 115-91) to lessen the dependency of our Armed Forces in Europe on Russian-sourced energy. As the Department of Defense continues to fulfill its mission in Europe, it is imperative that our military's operations are insulated from any possible Russian manipulation or disruption of the energy supply. Accordingly, we strongly urge you and the Pentagon leadership to create a long-term, strategic plan that will accomplish the goals of Section 2880 and guide our military's effort to reduce its dependence on Russian energy.

As European partner nations struggle with the geopolitical challenge of overreliance on Russian energy, our military now has the chance to demonstrate leadership by strategically reducing our own usage of Russian energy. These efforts are critical because Russia has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness and capacity to intimidate and manipulate countries, such as Ukraine and European Union nations, by threatening to reduce or cut off energy exports. Therefore, reliance on current host nation utilities alone to such a large extent may not allow the operational flexibility needed to sustain a credible deterrence.

We anticipate the Russia Federation will continue to use energy - electricity, natural gas, oil, and refined oil products - as a political weapon in Europe. Therefore, the United States must prepare to complete its various missions and deter any threats to our forces or allies irrespective of, or in opposition to, hostile Russian actions. It is for this reason that Section 2880 authorizes and requires the Department of Defense to reduce, to the extent practicable, the dependence of U.S. military installations on Russian sourced energy and to ensure our military has the ability to sustain operations during any supply disruption.

This requirement from Congress, signed into law by the President, is directly in line with the 2018 National Defense Strategy, which states:

“Concurrently, Russia seeks veto authority over nations on its periphery in terms of their governmental, economic, and diplomatic decisions, to shatter NATO and change European and Middle East security and economic structures to its favor.”

Today, our military personnel in Europe are making countless decisions at the operational and tactical level that impact our overall energy security policy. Yet the nature of energy consumption means that these decisions will continue to matter for years to come. An immediate example involves construction planning for a new U.S. Army Medical Center at Rhine Ordnance Barracks Installation area in Germany, which will replace the Army Landstuhl Medical Center. Although a nearby mixed-fuels system is available and has served American installations in the area for many years, military and civilian decision-makers are reportedly considering introducing a new generator, which would burn Russian-sourced natural gas. In making decisions like this, DOD leaders should heavily consider the impact a future supply disruption could have on our operations alongside other factors like cost-effectiveness. All options must be discussed and reviewed, including partnering with local utilities and making long-term, strategic investments necessary to ensure the viability of mission critical operations.

Without an overarching, long-term plan to deal with Russia’s usage of energy as a weapon, these decisions are at risk of being uncoordinated and potentially inconsistent with the Administration’s National Defense Strategy and Congress’ guidance in Section 2880 of the FY18 NDAA. Military leadership must provide strategic guidance in development of a comprehensive effort to minimize reliance on Russian sources of energy at our bases.

Congress stands ready to work with the Department of Defense to ensure it has the proper authority and resources necessary to fulfill its mission and meet the requirements laid out in the FY18 NDAA. Please keep us apprised of progress on this issue and let us know how Congress can provide you with additional assistance, if needed.

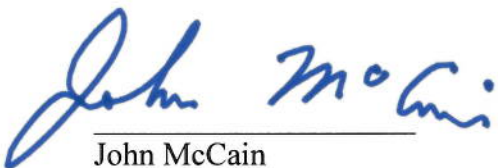
Thank you for your tireless service to the Nation, and to the brave men and women who defend it.



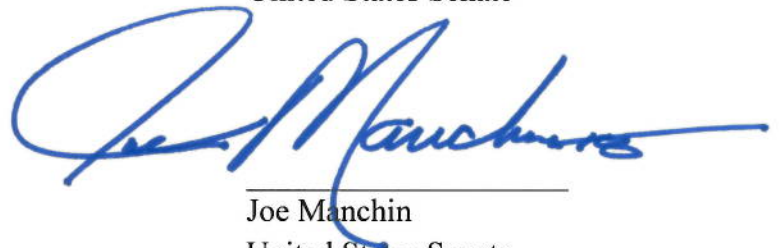
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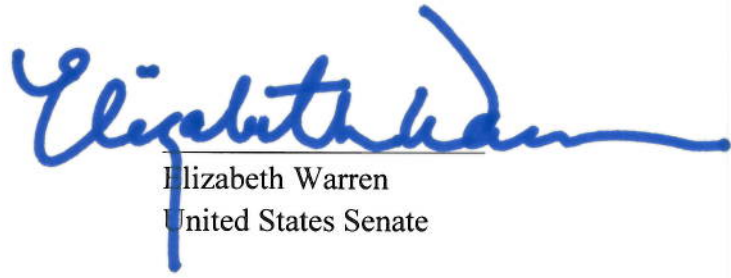
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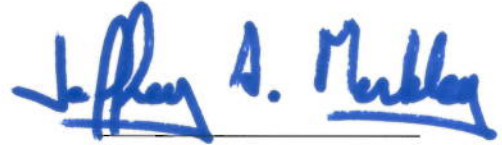
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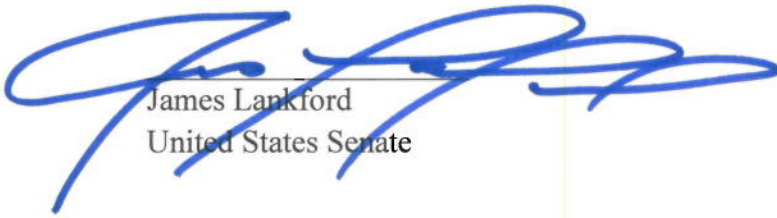
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