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November 28, 2023

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, Chairman Rogers, and Ranking Member Smith:

Since 1913, the mission of ADL has been to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” Today, ADL is a global leader in fighting antisemitism, exposing extremism, and monitoring and fighting the spread of hate in our communities. For decades, one of the most important ways in which ADL has fought against bigotry and antisemitism has been by investigating extremist threats across the ideological spectrum, producing research to inform the public of the scope of the threat, and working with law enforcement, educators, the tech industry, and elected leaders to promote best practices that can effectively address and counter these threats.

As you finalize the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (FY 2024 NDAA), and work through conference to resolve the Senate and House versions, we strongly urge you to include provisions aimed at protecting our armed forces and uniformed services from the national security threat posed by antisemitism and extremism, and exclude provisions which hamper counter extremism efforts.

Antisemitism, hate, and extremism pose a growing threat to America’s national security – trends that have been exacerbated by the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel. DHS and FBI detailed this heightened threat landscape in Congressional testimony in the [Senate](#) and [House](#) earlier this month, where they warned that Hamas could inspire violence in the U.S., the likes of which we have not seen since ISIS, with multiple foreign extremist groups calling for attacks against Americans and the West in recent weeks.

Jewish communities across the U.S. are experiencing antisemitism at levels not seen in generations. ADL's most recent [Audit of Antisemitic Incidents](#) in the United States found that antisemitic incidents reached an all-time high in the United States in 2022, with a total of 3,697 incidents of assault, harassment and vandalism. In the wake of the October 7th terrorist attack, ADL is once again seeing a sharp spike in antisemitism here in the United States. To date, ADL has tracked 832 antisemitic incidents of assault, vandalism, and harassment across the country, an average of 28 incidents per day. Reports of antisemitic incidents between October 7th and November 7th were 316% higher than the 200 incidents reported during the same period in 2022. At the same time, [domestic violent extremism](#) has been on the rise in recent years. The Jewish community continues to be a primary target of extremists, regardless of ideology, alongside other targeted communities.

At a time when our country is facing a rise in [antisemitism](#), [extremism](#), and hate in all forms, our military is no exception. There have been [numerous arrests](#) in recent years of military members related to their ties to a range of extremist ideologies, from Islamist extremism to white supremacy to anti-government militia groups. A recent Department of Defense inspector general reported 92 cases of punishments for extremist activity. In our review and analysis of a leaked Oath Keepers membership database, [ADL identified](#) 117 individuals who it believes currently serve in the U.S. military, an additional 11 people who serve in the reserves, and 31 individuals who hold civilian positions or are military contractors. Massachusetts Air National Guardsman Jack Teixeira, [the alleged leaker of classified](#) U.S. documents, on Ukraine and U.S. intelligence, was the leader of a private channel on Discord, a popular gaming platform. According to [media reporting](#), Teixeira talked openly and frequently about wanting to start a 'race war' and freely used racist and antisemitic terms both online and offline.

In light of Teixeira and other similar cases, we encourage you to **support** several provisions that were adopted with bipartisan support in the House Report. Specifically:

- TITLE V—MILITARY PERSONNEL POLICY, ITEMS OF SPECIAL INTEREST, Report on Extremism-Related Training and Education Programs for Servicemembers
 - *Language that requires the Secretary of Defense to report on the implementation and status of its training and education for Department of Defense members and civil personnel to protect the military from extremist recruitment and activity.*
- TITLE X—GENERAL PROVISIONS, ITEMS OF SPECIAL INTEREST, Report on Department of Defense's Security Clearance Screening Process for Individuals Under Current or Previous Investigation for Terrorist or Foreign State Sympathies
 - *Reporting requirement that the Department of Defense review its progress in developing improved security policies and procedures, and the Department's policies and processes in adjudicating security clearances of individuals who pose a threat to national security.*

ADL supports the inclusion of provisions to support Israel's security and promote peace in the Middle East during this time of crisis.

The BDS movement uses divisive and inaccurate terms like "apartheid," "genocide," "settler colonialist," and "supremacists" to refer to aspects of Israeli action or policy they criticize, language which serves to demonize the Jewish state and those who support its existence. ADL believes that many of the founding goals of the BDS movement, which effectively reject or ignore the Jewish people's right of self-determination, or that, if implemented, would result in the eradication of the world's only Jewish state, are antisemitic. As such, we **support** efforts to ensure that contractors supporting our military are not a party to such antisemitic activity and urge you to maintain the following provision that was adopted with bipartisan support in the House Report:

- TITLE XII—MATTERS RELATING TO FOREIGN NATIONS, ITEMS OF SPECIAL INTEREST, Assessment of Participation of Contractors in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement Against Israel

- *The requirement that the Department of Defense issue an annual report confirming that none of their contractors participate in or are engaged with the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.*

There has been a growing retreat on counter extremism programs within the Department of Defense. Offices and programs stood up in the beginning of the Biden Administration have been quietly dismantled. The Secretary's much-talked about "[stand down](#)" should be a beginning, not the end, of robust Department efforts to root out extremism in the ranks. Only one of the six recommendations made in the Department's Countering Extremism Working Group report has been implemented – much more can and must be done to protect our troops and reinforce national security. Given the recent examples of extremism within the ranks, the efforts of the extremism working group must continue. We **oppose** any effort to defund the extremism working group within the Department of Defense, specifically the partisan language from the House Bill:

- Section 598, PROHIBITION ON FEDERAL FUNDS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COUNTERING EXTREMISM WORKING GROUP

- *The requirement that no funds authorized shall be appropriated to fund the Department of Defense Countering Extremism Working Group.*

An NDAA with appropriate language that addresses hate and extremism is a critical step towards protecting all communities including the military, and strengthening our national security.

Sincerely,

Max Sevilla
Senior Vice President for National Affairs
ADL (Anti-Defamation League)