

Julian Barnes: [00:01](#) All right. I'm going to start and I'm going to ignore your talking. My name is Julian Barnes. I'm with the New York Times. Uh, we have a great panel here. Uh, we've got, uh, two of the smartest members of Congress up on the stage with us today. We've got Mac Thornberry of Texas, the current ranking member and past chairman of the House Armed Service Committee. He's been a leader in the Republican party on national defense issues writ large, but important for our discussion today, especially on talking about authorizations for the use of military force. Alissa Slotkin is a brand new democratic member of Congress from a swing district, um, who in the course of the last six months has become the most quoted democratic representative in the New York Times on national security matters. I'm glad you counted. And that is because of her deep experience. A CIA analyst with three tours in Iraq, veteran of the Bush white houses wars, our office, a senior Pentagon policy maker in the Obama Administration.

Julian Barnes: [01:11](#) Um, we're gonna focus the first part of our discussion today on the authorization for the use of military force. Uh, as you all know here, the 2001 AUMF was passed in the wake of the nine 11 attacks to authorize the war in al Qaeda and the invasion of Afghanistan. It remains the law today. It's been used by presidents of both parties to take on terrorists. It was used by the Obama administration, uh, as the authority on which the war against Isis was waged. Um, there are many today who think it's getting a little long in the tooth and there have been reports in the press, um, including the New York Times. Ah, that Secretary of state, Mike Pompeo believes the 2001 authorization of the use of military force could authorize the president to take action in Iran. A prospect, many Democrats have reacted to in horror and may not sit well with some Republicans. And so let's open this up to our panelists on that very point. Should the 2001 authorization for the use of military of force applied to Iran, Alissa? No.

Elissa Slotkin: [02:19](#) Um, you know, I think it's important to know the history and it gets very complicated. Um, if you're not in the, in the weeds, but in the wake of nine 11, we passed the 2001 AUMF which basically said that we were able to go after al Qaeda and um, and the Oregon, the countries that harbor it. And that's the way we went to Afghanistan. And a couple of years later we passed the, the 2002 authorization for that led us to fight Saddam and go after Saddam. And um, for me, you know, we have been using the 2001 authorization of military force to go after affiliates of al Qaeda for a long time since then, um, including, you know, uh, during my time the Pentagon. Um, I think the important thing was for me when I started hearing Secretary

Pompei oh, talk publicly, you know, and is SFRC hearing about the connection between al Qaeda and Iran. Certainly my ears pricked up. Um, I don't think anyone who voted for the AUMF back in 2001 in, in any world, imagine that it was for Iran. And I think while we can't go into the details, the connections between Iran and al Qaeda do not meet the definition of harboring. So I do not think so. And I was a cosponsor of a resolution in our defense, our, uh, an amendment that said no. In fact, the administration does not have the authority to go to war with Iran. We always retain the right to self defense. Always.

Mac Thornberry:

[03:42](#)

Mac, can I step back for a second please? Because this starts with the constitution. The constitution says it's congress that declares war. Um, and for all you former executive branch people who think Congress is an inconvenience, uh, it also says it's Congress's job to provide and raise and support, provide and maintain the military forces of the United States. That's our job. And I, and I think, uh, a number of people, both sides of the aisle, take those words seriously. Uh, the challenge has been and will continue to be even more so how you apply that approach to the kinds of threats that we face now. So I think Alyssa is exactly right. I voted for that 2001 AUMF a few days after nine 11. I could not have imagined all sorts of things that have happened. I couldn't have imagined isis. I couldn't have imagined the way that the al Qaeda Isis threat has spread to so many countries.

Mac Thornberry:

[04:41](#)

Uh, it has evolved over, over time in a ways that, that we couldn't possibly, um, we had, we attempted in the house in 2011 to update the AUMF, uh, actually 2011, 2012 to include the associated forces explicitly. We couldn't get the Senate to go to go along with us. Uh, but so it is a, a real challenge. And yet congress has yet to step up and meet that challenge, partly because of partisanship. And we'll get into that. I do not think the administration or virtually anybody in Congress believes the 2001 or Umf justifies a, or authorizes a war against the regime of Iran. Now, as Alyssa said, what it said in the 2001 against those who committed the acts of September 11th, and those who harbor them. And, and so they're, you know, I think that's one reason palm peo gets a little squiggly, uh, both because he does want to foreclose some potential option that meets that test. Uh, and there's no secretary of state that wants to be limited, you know, in, in, in what they can do. But, but I don't think there's a serious attempt to use it for that purpose. I don't think anybody would, it the

- Julian Barnes: [05:59](#) defense authorization bill that passed the house had a, uh, measure that restricted, uh, the president's, um, ability to attack Iran. You supported it, right? Uh, uh, you were skeptical of it. Um, what was this, what did I've simplified that. Tell me what you, what this measure does and whether it's, uh, I mean, obviously you think it's proper, but, but is this a restriction on the president's power?
- Elissa Slotkin: [06:27](#) Yeah, I mean, just to make sure we're talking about the same thing we, we, we did, I did co-sponsor, um, uh, uh, an amendment that base that said, the president does not have the authority granted by Congress in the 2001 AUMF to go to war with [inaudible].
- Julian Barnes: [06:41](#) Would that restrict what he does or not? And what scenarios? Unpack that a little.
- Elissa Slotkin: [06:46](#) So again, this is all kind of, um, you know, in the weeds stuff, but we always retain the right to self defense, always, always, always. And we all also have, you know, provisions under the war powers to make sure that the president always have any president has the ability to go and fight and defend the country no matter what. But if you're going to launch a, you know, medium to longterm war and get us in gross to another war, you need to come back to Congress. That was the signal that we were trying to send a reassertion of Congress's responsibilities. Um, and you know, I, I'm glad to hear that. Um, you know, I certainly trust representative Thornberry that he doesn't believe it gives us that authority, but we couldn't quite get a straight answer. And particularly when the secretary of state opens the door on that question, we felt it was necessary to put down a very clear statement. Cause I've, we've personally seen, we've seen this movie, right? We've seen the movie or we start talking about the connection between al-Qaida and in the case of 2002 Iraq, right? We've seen that movie, we've seen that rhetoric and we now know in hindsight it was embellished, it was exaggerated and it was done for political purposes. So, um, I've seen that movie. I didn't love it the first time and we wanted to make clear that we weren't going to go through it again. Yeah.
- Julian Barnes: [08:02](#) Give this a resolution like this, uh, amendment like this, uh, merely clarifies what the authorization for the use of military force does or does not do, but does not restrict the president's, uh, ability to act in self defense. Is there a problem with it? What is flawed about that approach? What, what concern many of us was not just that amendment, but an additional one that was added that says none of the funds in this act shall be used

to do all sorts of things related to Iran. So we had the lawyers at the Joint Staff and Centcom look at that language and their concern was that it went so far as to restrict our partner sharing with a key intelligence, sharing with partners in the key areas, uh, that it may have even interfered with our ability to defend Israel in certain circumstances against, uh, Iranian.

Mac Thornberry: [08:56](#)

And, and so there were a list of things that the lawyers who have to live under this every day said, this goes way too far, not just clarifying, but the combination of those two amendments, uh, would limit their ability to do some things that they're doing. Now. And this gets more to the fundamental question that we've kind of been talking about. Okay, when is it war that Congress has to approve? When is it self-defense? When is it, we heard earlier today about escorting tankers in and out of the Persian Gulf. Does that require approval from Congress? What about shooting down a drone? That is so, so that's part of the reason. These are challenging questions. At what level does it require congressional authorization meet that test of war in current, uh, in, in, uh, in current circumstances? I mean it's not clear. It's, it's the back and forth that that Kinda determines it. But, but the feeling for many of us was that what the house of majority did went too far.

Julian Barnes: [09:57](#)

Alyssa, you've been on both sides in the Pentagon, on the executive in Congress as, as, uh, as a member. Where do you, how do you see that very issue of what Mac was laying out there of, of when congressional action, Congressional authorization, Congressional approval is needed? Is there, is it case by case note when you see it, is there, are there principles that we should act by? Um, because as we've seen sometimes a single strike can lead to a longer,

Elissa Slotkin: [10:32](#)

yeah, I think it has to do with the, the temporal nature of it. And I think if you're, if the president and the administration is going into it thinking that this is the beginning of a longer offensive, I think they need to come back to Congress. I don't personally know that they need to come back to Congress, tiff escort ship sort of shoot down a drone, especially if the drone is acting in an aggressive way when there's no way you can't do that operationally. I think to be honest, I mean it's important to have this conversation. I'm personally much more worried about an inadvertent war with Iran. Then I end with, I am with a purposeful planned and intended war with Iran. And I think just based on history, we are more likely to get into wars by mistake than by intent. And I think that is when I look at the combination of things happening in the Gulf right now, that is my much bigger fear that we will just skip into something, uh,

because people will get their backs up because a, a combination of um, you know, needing to to um, look strong for both sides.

Elissa Slotkin: [11:32](#) Um, you know, maybe some quick to quick decision making that we could certainly find ourselves in a cycle of escalation.

Julian Barnes: [11:38](#) So let's drill down on that a little bit and broaden the discussion. What do you think of the administrations military moves so far to sort of try what they've said is to rebuild deterrence with additional ships, Patriot batteries, more troops. Um, I wonder if you both could, uh, say what you think about that. Say if you think it can reestablish deterrence, what more should be done or what less should be done?

Mac Thornberry: [12:08](#) Well, for me, I think what the administration has done has been appropriate in the sense that when they've sent additional troops to the Middle East, they have been to man Patriot batteries, defensive positions. There has been no additional authentic capability that they have put in, into the region. And I think, you know, it's, it's, um, there were some of us that met with the president, uh, just after the, a drone was struck down on both sides of the aisle, House and Senate, and, and he was wrestling with what's the appropriate response. Um, and, and, and so we pulled back what, what the, apparently they began, I don't think anybody can say that he, it has been pushing out to provoke some sort of war, but, but at the same time, um, the idea that Auron can do all sorts of things without any sort of reaction is just going to, uh, encourage them to take further steps in order to get a reaction.

Mac Thornberry: [13:09](#) I think that one of the, in all of these issues, one of the things we're not very good at, and some panelists talked about it maybe yesterday, is understanding the dynamics inside, in this case, the country of Iran, uh, economy going down some leadership struggles and so forth. To what extent do they say, see provoking a fight with us as a way out of their current internal difficulties? Uh, so there's that whole dynamic. It's not just about what we do, it's also about what they do and what they think and what they see as their opportunities. So making it clear that you can't get something cheaply and as far as military, I think is important. Is there a guarantee it's gonna work? No. Because of this internal dynamics that are going on in Saudi. Ron,

Julian Barnes: [13:56](#) how well do you think, uh, Alyssa, do we understand what's going on, uh, inside or on right now? [inaudible]

- Elissa Slotkin: [14:03](#) well, we've always had a problem understanding what's going on. Any of these regimes that are, that are largely closed to us where we don't have diplomats, where we don't have regular engagement. Um, and I think our, our understanding of it is actually going down. And I, I mean, I think it's important to look at the context of what's happened in over the past year, right? I, I do think, um, we have to factor in not just Ron's bad behavior now, but the context of the last year since we pulled out of the JCPO way, um, and the, the return of sanctions and the economic pressure that they're under. It doesn't excuse any of the activity that they do, but I do think it is important to put ourselves in the story appropriately. Um, so, uh, unfortunately, um, you know, I think we had a moment there during the negotiations where because they were at one point succeeding, if you're the Iranians, then it was promoting the moderates, right?
- Elissa Slotkin: [14:56](#) It was sort of like the moderates were bringing Iran kind of a win. Um, and now, um, I think that that is largely being pushed to the floor and we're seeing the return of the hard liners and pizza people like cost them Soleimani who's the head of the kids force, you know, he is a dynamic, serious leader. I am not clear how much direction he takes and how much freelancing he gets to do. But I know that, um, in this kind of environment, he's probably given a ton of leeway. And I think we know that now. Um, I, I personally think that means we're going to see more aggressive behavior, more violent things coming out of the Iranians. And that's when you start to see that tit for tat. And I think for me it's hard to understand exactly what we're aiming for, what the administration is aiming for, right.
- Elissa Slotkin: [15:42](#) We pulled out, we're adding it. Pressure. Is the goal to get them back to the table? Is the goal to reestablish deterrence and put, get him back to the table a few years from now? What are we trying to do? Um, is it regime change? We don't know. I mean, uh, John Bolton has written about regime change in Iran his entire adult life. So if I don't know what the strategy is, I don't know how the Iranians understand it. And that's where you get into real misunderstanding and miscalculation something we do that's defensive. Suddenly they interpret as authentic and you're in the spiral.
- Audience Member: [16:17](#) Mack, will you react to that? Do you think you have an understanding of what the administration's strategy is with Iran?
- Mac Thornberry: [16:26](#) Well, I, I will interpret the way I understand it, understanding that I don't work for the administration. Um, I think they're

trying to, uh, put pressure on Iran. Uh, you know, if lightning strikes and, and the regime changes, uh, you know, so be it. But I don't really think that's the goal. I think the goal is to put pressure on them so that they do come back to the table and then the administration's eyes negotiate a better JC pla maybe beyond just the nuclear program to include missiles. Um, and in any event put greater pressure on the regime so that it is harder for them to engage in all of these nefarious activities around the whole Middle East in which they have been engaged. I think that's their approach.

Audience Member: [17:12](#)

Are we in a hybrid conflict of gray zone conflict with Iran right now with tankers being detained and uh, drones being shot down? What do you think? Uh, Mack. Yeah,

Mac Thornberry: [17:25](#)

absolutely. And it's not just that they're using proxies. They're d they're using proxies in Yemen. They have proxies with Hezbollah. They have all sorts of militia groups inside a rock. Um, and, and the danger that those militia groups would be set loose to attack us service members is part of what changed just a few minutes moment a few months ago and led to, to the cycle. So you have the use of proxies, presumed deniability. You have the Iranian military, the RGC, which, you know, they kind of do their own thing. You have cyber war going or cyber conflict going on all the time. Uh, so there are a lot of characteristics of, uh, what we've seen with this gray zone warfare that the Russians have used fairly effectively in Ukraine that Iran has learned from. And in some ways even even advanced beyond what the Russians have done.

Julian Barnes: [18:23](#)

Alyssa, do you agree? And what is the, from your experience, the best approach for the United States to sort of counter that?

Elissa Slotkin: [18:30](#)

I largely agree, um, with the exception that, um, that's been going on a lot longer than recently. Right? I mean, to me the, I was in a rock Shia militia analyst by training at the CIA. That's what I did. So I spent years of my life, eight years of my life looking at the connection between really bad people in Iraq, both bad militias and Iranian weapons, material leadership training. Um, that connection has been there almost as long as our invasion, since our invasion. And it's gotten more sophisticated. It's gotten, you know, with heavier weapons. Um, we've seen them adapt, um, and, and apply that model all over the region. So that's been going on for a long time. Um, what to do about it is the much more complicated question and you know, the spread of Iranian destabilizing behavior happened at the same time that we got really entrenched in Iraq and Afghanistan and the idea that we can somehow go through

these various countries and root out that problem take on Iran or at least have these proxy fights, um, it feels exhausting, right?

Elissa Slotkin: [19:39](#) I absolutely believe that they should be punished for their terrorism, for their destabilizing behavior. Right. I've lost friends and colleagues to Iranian rockets in Iraq. But how you go about it is one of the trickiest questions and the answer tends to be strong states with strong militaries keep these guys out. Weak states like Yemen, like Syria, weaker states like Iraq allow the men. So the model, um, should we choose to accept it or use it is to build up these states so that they can take care of their own borders. And we are not constantly following the Iranians as they move around the region.

Julian Barnes: [20:20](#) The administrations approach to Iran, most notably with the, uh, withdrawal from the Iran deal. But other, uh, options that have been done have increased tensions driven a wedge with European allies who have a, uh, different who support the Iran deal still. Uh, there's divisions there. Um, you both have talked, spoken about the importance of, um, how much has that, uh, damaged, uh, alliances with Europe, uh, and others, or is it the case that that's compartmentalize to that issue and more broadly, uh, agreement? There's more agreement than disagreement. What do you think Mac?

Mac Thornberry: [21:08](#) Well, I w one of the things I think that is absolutely a Raj objective with all of this tanker business and what not that they've been doing the past few weeks in, in the Persian Gulf is to drive a wedge between us and our European allies. And the hope is that, uh, the Europeans will go ahead and, and provide economic assistance, trade all the economic things Iran thinks they need for their economy in spite of our sanctions. So it's driving that wedge between us that is one of, of their key goals. Um, I think it, it, the, the difference between the Trump administration, the Europeans on whether to stay in the JC POA did do some damage, but it was in the context of other differences, you know, step up to NATO. We may withdraw, uh, we may withdraw from some. So there were several things going on at once. I th uh, from, from our conversations more recently, um, you know, I think they would still like to have a unified front, but excuse me. But I don't think that fundamentally it is damaged. The alliance, uh, uh, the, there are, there are, I want to say bigger, uh, maybe concerns that they may have about our sticktuitiveness and, and some other things. Lizzie, do you want to weigh in or go to questions?



Elissa Slotkin: [22:33](#) Um, I, I would just say I agree with Max last point that I'm pulling out of the JCPO way I think was a big problem for our European allies. Um, I think it fits into a bigger narrative of a trust deficit that we now have with our allies. They want to trust us, they want to work with us. They having friends is a good thing. Um, and I think on both sides that makes us both stronger. But I think, um, you know, the way that this administration has treated our allies has created or exacerbated a true trust deficit and um, it's going to take some time to repair. And it's something that breaks with 60 years of national security policy, whether you're a Democrat or Republican. Um, and I think that that is, um, obviously a deeply, deeply flawed approach. Um, and the JCPO a just sort of fit into that bigger story.

Mac Thornberry: [23:28](#) Let's open it up to you. Um, let me go first to a retired general, a Dunlop there in the back. Um, there's a microphone right next to you.

Julian Barnes: [23:38](#) Thank you very much, Charlie Dunlap. Now with two clause school t to uh, sir related questions. One is what would be your definition of harbor

Audience Member: [23:46](#) within the meaning of the 2001, AMF. And then secondly, when Senator Chris Murphy was here, he's very much of an advocate for new AMF, but he said something, he said that he believes that the executive needs to come to congress quote, even if it looks like an emergency. Do you agree with that or, or what would be your thoughts on that?

Mac Thornberry: [24:09](#) Oh, I've got several thoughts. Um, when Paul Ryan became speaker, he asked me to try to have a bunch of informal meetings with Republicans to see if there were a way to get Republicans, uh, on the same page about updating the AUMF when, and President Obama, of course was an office. So what I found was, uh, what Republicans generally in the house wanted were a bunch of restrictions on our military. You could do this. And you had to do it in this way and so forth. There were just unreasonable. So now we kind of have the opposite with president Trump in there. It's very challenging to, to get Democrats to update it to, I know you have to open it up again because of all of the concerns that they have about him. I worry that we have gotten to a place where our partisanship is so intense that uh, opening it up and, and, and um, uh, trying to update it, uh, may not on a bipartisan basis may or may not be possible.

- Mac Thornberry: [25:15](#) What may be more possible is, is to step back on something that is not an immediate crisis and think through how we would authorize the use of force for something like a cyber war. Now that presents some real challenges that we need to think through, uh, because it, you know, it's not just electrons going back and forth. There can be physical consequences. People can die. Uh, even if it is a cyber conflict, maybe what we need to think about with at to get away from the, what the partisanship that has engulfed us is one of the [inaudible] make a harder problem, but it's not an immediate problem. And maybe that can help us get back to Congress fulfilling its role under the constitution. I don't know. It's just one one thought.
- Elissa Slotkin: [26:06](#) Yeah, I actually think, um, I know it's slightly off topic, but I think Mack has completely sprayed, excuse me. Representative Thornberries is, um, is exactly right. Um, you know, if you think about the changing nature of warfare, I think we are very unprepared doctrine wise in how to deal with it. So for instance, I live in Michigan. I represent a state that can get kinda cold if we had a cyber attack on our critical infrastructure. You know, this year during our polar vortex, we had an accidental explosion of a natural gas facility and our governor had to get on TV and tell everyone to turn the heat down below 60 degrees or else we're going to lose power and we were going to lose the ability to heat our warming stations. So I thought about, well what if that happened intentionally? What if someone purposely took out a part of our grid and 26 elderly people froze to death in their homes?
- Elissa Slotkin: [26:57](#) What is the proportional response to that? It was an attack. It was an attack. It was through very non traditional means. Um, we're the United States of America. We tend to believe in proportional response. We don't go and kill elderly people in their homes. So how do we respond? Um, when something like that happens, um, that we are, I think very unprepared for. And I think there is a ton of work that we can do together cause we need it. Um, and it may be less of a lightning rod than some of the more difficult pieces. Are there questions?
- Speaker 6: [27:33](#) Do I see any hands? All right.
- Julian Barnes: [27:37](#) So let me, let me ask you guys a little bit about, um, talking a little bit about the cyber, but not in, in a, in a Russian, uh, context we had, um, during the midterm elections, uh, some, uh, more aggressive actions by cyber command, things to the authorization that Congress had done. Are we doing enough offensively to defend, uh, American elections, uh, to defend

against foreign influence campaigns? The kinds of things that, uh, professionals have said we're going to see more of in 2020.

Elissa Slotkin:

[28:14](#)

I mean, um, I think without going into the details, the, the good news is, you know, we've been briefed a number of times, both as all, you know, the entire House of Representatives and in committee, and I do feel better now that we are confronting the challenges that confounded us in 2016 in a much more real way. So the two directories in the right direction, do I believe that we're protected? And 2020 is a good to go? No. Um, and I think that there is a ton of legislative work. You know, we're, we're doing a ton of appropriate oversight right now. Um, since the mall report came out, that's a whole category of activity that's going on in Congress, but we actually haven't passed any laws that make us safer than we were in 2016. So there's a group of us bipartisan who got together called Task Force Century to actually address that.

Elissa Slotkin:

[29:08](#)

Um, but I do think that particularly the director of national intelligence, and I know he just announced a new, I'm not going to get the right term. I think it's Zar or something akin to a czar. I'm on election security. I think the intelligence community and the Pentagon are taking this seriously. I was glad to hear it. Um, but we still have a long way to go and it literally undergirds our democracy. So it should be the highest priority order. I would like the White House to take it more seriously. The institutions, the departments and the agencies are taking it, man.

Mac Thornberry:

[29:42](#)

I, I think, I think that's absolutely right. Uh, 2018 election was much better than 2016 largely because cybercom took a more aggressive stance in preventing predominantly Russian interference in our election. And that was a good thing, but we should not think that that's the end of the story because they saw what we did and now they're working on their plans to get around it. So it's a cat and mouse game, uh, as both sides try to outmaneuver one another. Um, I do think that that the kind of oversight that uh, Alyssa was just talking about is really, really important. Uh, because I worry that as the military becomes more aggressive in protecting this essential part of our democracy, that somebody who doesn't win the election or it doesn't come out well, we'll politicize the military in some way. So the importance of, of the cyber comm coming to US till we're tired of looking at them to tell him about what, tell us both sides of the aisle, what they're doing to try to make sure this does not become political in, in the 2020 election is really very important. I think critical point,

Julian Barnes: [30:55](#) Kim dozer I saw has a question in the back. We could get her a microphone with [inaudible]. We are not, we've got another microphone race. Let's see. There we go.

Audience Member: [31:08](#) Hey. So it was widely reported in Britain that ahead of um, the strike that president Trump ultimately called off against Iran, that Britain got, um, uncharacteristically last minute notice and has felt a little left out of some of the planning when the leading ally of the five eyes arrangement is being iced out. What does that say about how the Trump administration is handling, um, the issue of Iran and could the disagreement between Britain and the EU and the u s over Iran really, um, tear apart the fabric that undergirds that alliance?

Mac Thornberry: [31:54](#) Um, I don't know the details of, of what was or was not conveyed. Um, I'll probably speak out of school, but, uh, I will say that there were the, the leadership of Congress House and Senate, Republican, Democrat and then the committee chairs and rankings of armed services, intelligence, so forth, met with the president when he was trying to decide what to do. And, and what he heard uniformly from us was do it with our allies, but partly because of what we were talking about a while ago, orange, trying to divide us. It is essential that whatever you do about this jump drone shoot down, that we do it with our allies at, uh, to prevent them from splitting us. And also to ha because as, as the president will point out, we don't really need oil out of the Middle East anymore in anymore, uh, but everybody else does and the global economy does. And so what the approach we need to take with Iran and what they've been doing needs to be, uh, one with our, uh, global allies, uh, given the disarray in the British government right now, I would not make too much out of, well, they didn't call us in time for this or the other, uh, incident. But, uh, through the disarray, we need to bend over backwards in my view, uh, to stay close to all our allies, especially in my opinion, our closest ally around the world. And that's the UK.

Mac Thornberry: [33:28](#) Another, we've got another hand in the back. Uh, if we could get a microphone

Speaker 8: [33:35](#) to [inaudible].

Mac Thornberry: [33:36](#) Do we have a microphone going into the back? It's going there slowly.

Audience Member: [33:42](#) Hey there, I'm, I'm Betsy Woodruff with the daily beast. There was reporting in June that, uh, the u s government obtained intelligence showing the Saudis expanded their ballistic missile

program and that the administration did not share that intelligence with important members of congress in a timely manner. I'm just wondering if what your guys' thoughts are on sort of the intelligence sharing relationship between the administration and the hill and if there have been any changes since that particular episode unfolded.

Speaker 8: [34:13](#)

Okay.

Elissa Slotkin: [34:13](#)

So I think Mac might be the better person to answer this because I only started in Congress in January, so I don't know if what we're getting is good or bad. Normal, not normal. Um, I'm a former CIA officer, so I'm always wanting more. Um, and it has been hard to get information on certain topics. I will acknowledge, I don't know if that's purposeful, but I see I don't have a comparative to how it used to be. Yeah, I would, I would.

Mac Thornberry: [34:39](#)

So I've been doing this a while. I would say there are ups and downs and there have been struggles with pretty much every administration I can think of, uh, to get information. And, and it, as I say, uh, comes up and down, a lot of it depends on our persistence and asking, uh, to, to, to get it. And, uh, and, and developing this is partly trust to the, the trust in various agencies that, uh, we can have a responsible conversation and we will take good care of the information that is, that is exchanged. I, I will, I will say, you know, just as one example, if this was in, uh, several of the newspapers last week, where on a bipartisan basis, some of us, uh, sent a letter to the Trump administration demanding that they share with at least some of the leadership and, and the Armed Services Committee, the rules of engagement for certain cyber contingencies. And the Obama folks did give us the, give us that information. The Trump people changed it, but then they were reluctant to show us we had to go all the way to the White House Council. Uh, but he has come back and said, okay, we will, we will follow that precedent. So, persistence, you got to keep asking. Um, and you've got to show that you're responsible. Uh, you, you know, you will be careful with the information, but I don't notice a tremendous change from this administration from the last or the one before or the one before.

Audience Member: [36:13](#)

Four other questions here. Uh, we have a gentleman in the back and the white shirts here comes the microphone right now, I'm still not clear why if it didn't, uh, m uh, an emergency or we have been attacked rather such as Pearl Harbor, why we don't follow the constitution and make the congress responsible for declaring war in that case, those specific instances. And for that new age type of a decision, I just don't understand why we

wouldn't want to wait and take the time if it's not being attacked since we're going to be sending our children to war. And the Congress has a responsibility for representing all the states, presumably all the people, most more so than any other body we got. And I think that's why it's in the constitution and I don't understand why we would deal with it. Okay.

Elissa Slotkin:

[37:12](#)

Yeah. Well, I can speak as someone who has a stepdaughter in the military. Um, right now has a husband who served for 30 years in the army that, um, I feel quite strongly about the need to rewrite the AUMF. It, I feel a lot of us who came in new our, um, freshmen who are veterans or former Intel folks who are, have a background working with the military in some form or fashion. It absolutely needs to be updated. Um, and I think the reality is if I can be frank, um, there are really polar opposite sides of this issue. There are people who want to leave zero authorization for any military force for anything. Um, which would be significant upheaval. There are people who want to keep things exactly the same, right? Uh, an AUMF in perpetuity. Um, and then there are people who said, well, let's erase everything now start from scratch and we'll figure it out.

Elissa Slotkin:

[38:10](#)

And I will just tell you, I deeply believe in amending the AUMF, but I also deeply believe that we can't put our problems on the u s military. We can't take our responsibilities and say we can't figure it out, so we're just going to go with nothing and let the military sorted out. We've got 50,000 forces in the Persian Gulf right now. If we took away the authorization of military force, every authorization right now, what would we do? Would we pull them all back by the letter of the law? We'd have to examine that. Um, and I just don't believe in outsourcing our disfunction to the u s military that said, we cannot live forever on this AUMF and we have used it in lots of corners of the world, in lots of places, for lots of different reasons. Um, it has basically been congress giving up more and more of its power by doing that. Um, but I believe in amending it with a replacement, not just evaporating the whole thing and shoving it all in the u s military.

Mac Thornberry:

[39:10](#)

If there was a possibility to replace the AUMF, should it have a sunset clause in it? So it does not last indefinitely. Um, I've, I've certainly been open to a time limit for an AUMF to force congress to re-examine the issue, uh, in, in this particular AMF against counter terrorism. I see. No Way. Or some people would want to have a geographic limit because the terrorist certainly don't limit themselves geographically. But as far as a time limit, as long as it's, I mean, you can't do it every two years. We've, you know, as you all know, we don't pass a budget every year

and we're trying to, uh, so, so it's gotta be five years or are there some sort of extended period of time. But I just want to emphasize if, if, if a Alyssa's daughter is out there for our country in a conflict, she needs to know that the whole country is behind her, not just the president, but that the whole country, and that is best manifested through an act of Congress, uh, that, that the co that, that, that the whole country is supporting this mission.

Mac Thornberry:

[40:12](#)

And, and so that's part of the reason I believe that they deserve that. Uh, is is part of the reason I believe that it is, it is so important. But let me, let me just emphasize, we're talking about one particular AMF here. When a Clinton sent in troops into the whole Bosnia campaign, there was no authorization to use military force in American forces. Died there when Obama was doing the assisting Europeans and overthrowing Kadafi. Uh, we were engaged in all sorts of ways, but there was no authorization for the use of military force there. As a matter of fact, I think every, every president since Truman has [inaudible] has used military forces in some sort of conflict situation without having a congressional vote two to ratified. And that's part of the reason, this issue that we were kinda talking about a little bit. What level of conflict is it that requires this whole of nation a stamp of approval, uh, in a world where there's some sort of conflict going on all the time. And as we were talking, cyber even makes that more complicated. But the, the key is, and I think we're in very much agreement, Congress has got to take steps to show that we can reclaim some of that authority that the constitution puts in us, but we need to do it in a responsible way, uh, and we need to do it in as nonpartisan away as we possibly can. That's the only way that it's going to be affected. We are out of time. Please help

Speaker 8:

[41:44](#)

join me in thanking the panel. [inaudible].