

KATHY CASTOR
14TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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August 30, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

RE: Oppose Overt Military Action in Syria

Without a direct threat to the national security of the United States, I oppose an overt military strike against Syria. As I have visited with my neighbors across my district this month I have heard from many of them who are extremely wary of military action that could lead to greater entanglement in a region where fighting factions are not aligned with the United States and our allies or our national interests. I urge you to be cautious and conservative and fully analyze the strategic aftermath.

As the Administration contemplates military action, I certainly expect that you do so in accordance with the U.S. Constitution and the War Powers Act that require the concurrence of the Congress. To date, most members have not been briefed, let alone had an opportunity to debate use of military force. This is necessary before the Administration acts.

An overt military strike by the United States is likely to exacerbate violence in the Middle East and put needed stability further out of reach. In Syria, the civil war for dominance between the controlling Arab Alawites, the Arab Sunni majority, the Kurdish minority, and other Christian and Druze minorities is complicated by proxy actors in the region and decades of incompetent authoritarian leadership and economic stagnation. A singular military strike by the United States will not change these dynamics. How the United States counters decades and sometimes centuries of repression is a long-term and difficult task. America is most effective when working together with other countries to focus economic, military, diplomatic and humanitarian leadership on a solution. At times coordinated military action is necessary to combat atrocities that violate international law or to protect innocent people from harm. No unified international coalition appears to exist for such coordinated overt military action at this time. In fact, the Arab League and most of our allies have declined to recommend such action.

I strongly reject the view that the lack of an overt military strike is equivalent to U.S. inaction in the face of the brutality and violation of international norms by Assad and Syria. In fact, America has been engaged in Syria for years through extensive covert actions, robust diplomatic efforts, and enormous humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees. We all strongly condemn

the reprehensible actions of the Syrian Assad regime and I understand that the Administration feels compelled to address the atrocities. At this time, I urge the Administration to focus on measures that bring stability to the region and not exacerbate the dire situation through overt military action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathy Castor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathy Castor
U.S. Representative
Florida – District 14