

White House: ‘We Look Forward’ to Working with GOP on Limitless War Authorization

Republicans leadership told to expect language from Obama administration that would provide new authorization for war in Iraq and Syria

By [Jon Queally](#)

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A Tuesday meeting between President Obama and top lawmakers, including the Republican leadership who now control both chambers of Congress, was used to discuss plans for passing a war authorization bill that would give congressional blessing to the U.S. war in Iraq and Syria that began in the summer of 2014.

According to lawmakers who left the meeting, language for an ‘authorization for use of military force’ (or AUMF) against Islamic State (or ISIL) militants who operate and control territory on both sides of the Iraq/Syria border could be sent to Congress within weeks.

As *Politico* [notes](#), the topic of “authorizing the continuing air war against ISIL emerged as a rare area of cooperation in a year that has so far featured several veto threats.”

Senator Bob Corker (R-TN), who now chairs the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, indicated progress and said language from the administration could come soon.

“I’m hopeful [the White House will] send something over in the next few weeks,” Corker said. “Hopeful.”

After the meeting, a White House statement said President Obama is “committed to working with members of both parties on text for an AUMF that Congress can pass to show the world America stands united against ISIL.” An administration official [told reporters](#), “we look forward to sharing a draft with Congress that reflects their bipartisan input.”

[Critics of Obama’s war in the region have repeatedly](#) rejected claims by the administration that AUMF’s left over from the Bush-era are still valid for the current military operations.

As the *Huffington Post* [reports](#):

It’s been five months since the U.S began bombing Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria. In that time, the U.S. has spent more than \$1 billion, participated in more than 1,700 air strikes, authorized roughly 3,000 U.S. troops in Iraq and lost three U.S. soldiers. All of this has gone on without new war authorization.

Obama maintains he doesn’t need new authority to bomb the Islamic State, [citing a sweeping AUMF from 2001](#) as his legal justification, but has said he welcomes it anyway. Lawmakers in both parties disagree he has that

authority. Some in Congress have grown tired of waiting for the White House to send draft language and have pushed for Congress [to move its own AUMF](#), but others are wary of advancing a war bill without sign-off from the White House. Typically, the White House begins the war authorization process.

It remains to be seen what the White House's language will include, but the best indication of their position [came from testimony by Secretary of State John Kerry during a Senate committee hearing in December](#). In those remarks, Kerry said the White House wanted an expansive, essentially limitless, authorization—one without geographic or time constraints. In addition, Kerry indicated the Pentagon did not want restrictions placed on its ability to send additional ground forces, including "combat troops," if they felt such forces were needed.

"We do not think an AUMF should include a geographic limitation," Kerry said at the time. And added, "we would not want an AUMF to constrain our ability to use appropriate force against ISIL in those locations if necessary. In our view, it would be a mistake to advertise to ISIL that there are safe havens for them outside of Iraq or Syria."

[Commenting](#) at *Antiwar.com*, Jason Ditz remarked on the likely warm reception the White House AUMF would receive in both the House and Senate. "With hawks dominated most of the committees in the new Senate," he wrote, "it seems like the passage of any authorization vote should be fairly easy, so long as the wording is vague enough to leave open the prospect for escalation."

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