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Thank you for taking the time to contact me. As your Senator, it is important for me to hear from you.

I appreciate hearing your thoughts and concerns about the President's proposal for a military strike against Syria. I share many of your concerns.

Protestors began organizing against the Assad regime in February 2011. President Assad since then has led a brutal crackdown against civilians and rebel fighters. Since the conflict began, reports indicate that as many as 100,000 Syrians have been killed. There may be as many as 2 million Syrian refugees in neighboring countries.

Most recently, the U.S. intelligence community assessed with high confidence that the Syrian regime used chemical weapons on a large scale against civilians and opposition fighters on August 21 in the suburbs of Damascus. In August, 2012, President Obama stated that the use or proliferation of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime would be a red line. This position was reiterated in April 2013 when there was evidence that chemical weapons had been used on a small scale.

In the days following the August 21 chemical attack, President Obama and members of his administration began making the case that the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime in Syria was a direct threat to U.S. national security, and that the U.S. must respond with a military strike. I agree that the use of chemical weapons should be strongly condemned by the U.S. and the international community. However, I continued to have concerns and questions regarding the goal of a military strike and the strategic plan surrounding the action in Syria.

I'm glad that President Obama came to Congress to seek authorization for the use of military force. I've heard from thousands of Iowans on this matter expressing concerns and questions about the U.S. policy toward Syria and the use of force. Congress has an important part in reflecting the concerns and views of Americans. On September 4, the

Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed a limited authorization for the use of military force in Syria by a vote of 10-7, with one voting present.

I had an opportunity to attend a secure briefing with Vice President Biden at the White House, and I heard directly from President Obama when he came to Capitol Hill to talk with senators. I also listened to his speech to the nation. I appreciate the complicated issues the President faces. Still, I don't think the case for military action has been made. Iowans strongly oppose military action by the United States. They have concerns and questions about what the President has proposed. If the goal is to deter and degrade Assad's ability to use chemical weapons, how would a limited strike achieve this goal? What are the risks of military action? What is the U.S. national interest in striking Syria? I'm still leaning against the authorization for the use of force that's been presented.

The Russian proposal to force Assad to turn over chemical weapons to international monitors presents a possible alternative. Military action should be the last resort, so this diplomatic offer, if credible and enforceable, needs to be considered.

Again, thank you for contacting me. I urge you to keep in touch.

Sincerely,
Chuck

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