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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2024

Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin,

We write you today as members of Congress, many of us having served our country honorably, in our commitment to the security and integrity of our nation's armed forces. Your dedication to rooting out extremist behavior within our ranks has been well documented and demonstrates a commitment to maintaining the honor and cohesion of our armed forces. It is with this shared commitment in mind that we urge your attention toward the equally pressing issue of left-wing extremism among active duty service members and veterans.

On February 25th, Aaron Bushnell, an active-duty member of the U.S. Air Force, broadcasted himself engaging in an act of self-immolation outside the Israeli Embassy here in Washington, D.C. Prior to committing this act, Aaron Bushnell repeatedly identified himself as an "anarchist." An ideology wholly incompatible with that of our constitutional republic and entirely inappropriate for a member of the United States Military who had taken an oath to defend it at all costs.

This act, motivated by his stated desire to protest Israel in what he described as complicity in injustice, demonstrates the potential for ideologically driven behaviors to undermine the values, discipline, and safety of our military community, irrespective of the political orientation of those ideologies.

Given your prior work in confronting extremism within the ranks, we are confident that you recognize the importance of a comprehensive approach to this challenge. It is imperative that our efforts to identify and mitigate extremist influences encompass all forms of ideology that threaten the cohesion and effectiveness of our armed forces.

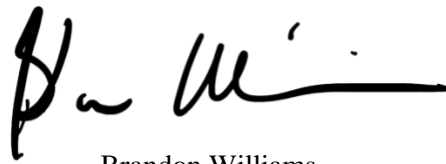
Our military must continue to exemplify the highest standards of professionalism and unity, standing ready to defend our nation against any threat, and we demand you do the same. By identifying left-wing extremism with the same determination applied to your previous efforts, we further ensure the strength, integrity, and readiness of our armed forces.

We look forward to your response and to hearing about the steps the Department of Defense is taking to address this concern.

Sincerely,



Derrick Van Orden
Member of Congress



Brandon Williams
Member of Congress



Brian Mast
Member of Congress



Eli Crane
Member of Congress



Mike Kelly
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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