

Duckworth calls on President to release declassified estimates of costs & consequences of starting a war against North Korea

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator and combat Veteran Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) called on President Trump today to provide the American people with an analysis of how many American servicemembers and innocent civilians would lose their lives if we went to war with North Korea. Though the President has needlessly and recklessly escalated tensions with Kim Jong-Un's regime in recent months, his Administration has not provided the American public with an official analysis of what the true costs of conflict with North Korea would be – not just in dollars and cents but in human lives. There are currently 29,000 American troops stationed in South Korea and another 50,000 stationed in the region—and tens of millions of innocent civilians also live within striking distance of North Korean weapons—all of whom could be at risk if



conflict breaks out.

“As the drumbeat of war accelerates, the American people must understand the potential consequences of the United States engaging in armed conflict against ,” Duckworth wrote. “This entails understanding how many families will watch their children deploy overseas and never return, how long the conflict will last, how much combat operations will cost and the continuing resources that will be required over the coming decades to properly care for Veterans who return home with service-related injuries. As a United States Senator who flew missions in combat during Operation Iraqi Freedom, I recall the lack of full debate and the absence of tough conversations during the run up to the Iraq War. As long as I am serving in the United States Senate, I will do everything in my power to prevent a repeat of the past rush to war.”

Duckworth joined Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) and five of their colleagues in introducing [legislation](#) yesterday that would prevent President Trump from launching a preemptive strike against North Korea without authorization from Congress unless there is an imminent threat or action is necessary to defend American citizens or our allies.

“To be clear, I am not a dove, but I am also not a reckless hawk, with scant appreciation for what the men and women in uniform, and their families, sacrifice every single day on behalf of our great nation,” Duckworth added. “I am not opposed to war if it is necessary to protect the United States of America, but our troops and our citizens deserve to first know the cost.”

Then-White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon speculated in August that 10 million people—including many Americans—living in Seoul, South Korea, could die within 30 minutes if hostilities broke out and a recent Congressional Research Service [report](#) estimated 300,000 people could die in the first few days of hostilities.

Duckworth’s letter and the Murphy legislation she cosponsored follow an escalating series of irresponsible tweets and reckless comments from President Trump threatening the North Korean regime. In her maiden speech on the Senate floor this year, Duckworth pledged that when the drums of war are beating in Washington, she will stand on her titanium legs in the Senate asking the tough questions and reminding our leaders before they rush into conflict what the true costs of war are.

Full text of the letter is available below.

Dear President Trump:

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) represents one of the most difficult national security and foreign policy challenges facing our nation. Since 2006,

the DPRK has tested six nuclear devices. Last month, the DPRK claimed it successfully tested a hydrogen bomb that can be mounted on an intercontinental ballistic missile. With close to 29,000 U.S. personnel stationed in Korea and another 50,000 in Japan, should hostilities break out, the ability for the DPRK to inflict horrific casualties on our military is of significant concern.

I am concerned that Members of Congress and the general public may not understand the size and scope of potential loss of life of U.S. military personnel, in addition to the scores of innocents that would be killed if a war erupted on the Korean Peninsula. To that end, I am writing to request that the United States Government bring transparency to the true costs of war associated with major combat operations on the Korean Peninsula.

As the drumbeat of war accelerates, the American people must understand the potential consequences of the United States engaging in armed conflict against the DPRK. The public was provided a brief window into the gravity of such action when one of your former senior advisors told a reporter that projections estimate approximately 10 million people residing in the capital of South Korea, Seoul – including many Americans – would be killed by conventional weapons in the first 30 minutes following an outbreak of war with the DPRK.

I fear the country is being deprived of an accurate assessment of what war against the DPRK would entail. Every citizen requires a transparent assessment of these costs to hold their elected representatives accountable for votes that carry life or death consequences. Accordingly, I am requesting you act swiftly to provide the public with declassified estimates of potential casualties, costs and a range of end states that could result from a limited or full-scale war against the DPRK.

The American people, through their representatives in Congress, make the decision to declare war, not the Executive Branch. Whether the public ultimately supports preemptive military action against the DPRK, or decides that a diplomatic solution is a superior course of action, we should all agree that the national conversation on when and why the United States goes to war must always be anchored around a set of cold hard facts.

Before Americans can effectively determine whether to support military action or not, they need as much information as possible. This entails understanding how many families will watch their children deploy overseas and never return, how long the conflict will last, how much combat operations will cost and the continuing resources that will be required over the coming decades to properly care for Veterans who return home with service-related injuries.

As a United States Senator and as someone who flew missions in combat during Operation Iraqi Freedom, I recall the lack of full debate and the absence of tough conversations during the run up to the Iraq War. A United States Army General was silenced and derided for disclosing the true number of ground forces that would be required to stabilize Iraq in the aftermath of major combat operations. This act of intimidation sent a shameful message to military officers and civilian experts who could have offered valuable insight before Congress voted to Authorize Use of Military Force in 2002.

We must never allow the consequences of war to be hidden from Americans. To be clear, I am not a dove, but I am also not a reckless hawk, with scant appreciation for what the men and women in uniform, and their families, sacrifice every single day on behalf of our great nation. As long as I am serving in the United States Senate, I will do everything in my power to prevent a repeat of the past rush to war. This requires providing my constituents and Americans throughout the country with a comprehensive, transparent accounting of what the United States Government estimates would be the cost of another Korean War.